

Thesis

PhD

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Hungarian Representation at the League of Nations in the 1920s

Doctoral School of History

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The background of the research, problem statement

On April 28, 1919, the League of Nations, which sought to dominate world diplomacy, was formed, with Geneva as its headquarters. In principle, the League of Nations and its bodies provided a forum for almost all issues. Attended by leading politicians, diplomats and experts from Europe and the world, the debates and decisions taking place there were followed with great interest by the public as well. Meanwhile, other international organizations were also based at Geneva.

Simultaneously with the founding of the League of Nations, Hungary experienced one of its greatest shocks: after the First World War and the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Hungary faced serious political, military and economic challenges. One of the main foreign policy goals of the country mutilated and weakened by the Treaty of Trianon, was the construction of independent Hungary, the reduction of its current isolation and the counterbalance of the future Little Entente countries. Now, as an independent state, it had to join the international diplomatic system, for which the newly formed League of Nations provided a good opportunity.

With its birth, the League of Nations clearly became the forum where various issues affecting more states could be debated. As a result of the Treaty of Trianon, several such vital issues arose from the Hungarian point of view (minority issues of Hungarians outside the new borders, specifying some of the new border lines, the division of railways, etc.), which had to be resolved.

My PhD thesis focuses on how Hungarian diplomacy was able to represent Hungarian interests before the League of Nations in the 1920s. To this end, a comprehensive examination of the “playing field”, i.e. the system in which the Hungarian foreign policy goals had to be enforced, is inevitable. Therefore, the dissertation examines the issue in two main lines: through a system-wide analysis that focuses on methods, techniques, operational mechanisms, and advocacy opportunities; and through the presentation of the people involved, focusing on the qualifications and network of people who operate the system or intend to prevail in it, examining whether the above have influenced their activities and effectiveness, and if so, how. The third line shows the events themselves: a more detailed presentation of the representation at the League of Nations in connection with Hungarian issues that I considered to be of particular importance.

The organization, operation, and opportunities of the League of Nations have already been much discussed in the 1920ies – partly because of seeking the right strategy to achieve a political goal. Thus, the first literature on the subject were soon born, including many Hungarian works – of course, they did not use a historical approach, but in addition to publications presenting and promoting the organization, they were usually legal studies examining the potentials of international law or papers discussing matters brought before the League. The next wave of professional literature on the League of Nations came in the post-disintegration period: these were already retrospective analyzes, including the work of several officials who had previously held key positions in the League, formulating constructive criticisms. The purpose of these still not historical works was largely to help the new organization, the then-established United Nations.

The research of the League of Nations was then removed from the agenda, and the League came up mostly at the level of remarks when presenting the history of multilateral diplomacy. This picture began to change in the 1980s and 1990s, when the League of Nations and its subsidiary bodies also began to become the focus of research on international relations.

Among the historians who specifically study the history or operation of the League of Nations, mention should certainly be made of James Barros, who deals with international relations between the two world wars; Ruth Henig, a British historian and politician from an otherwise baronial family who studies the history of international relations; Jean Siotis, a professor at the University of Geneva specifically studying international organizations and multilateralism; Klaas Dykmann, a German historian who deals with political science and international law; the work of the French historian Jean-Michel Guieu, and a Canadian historian dealing with colonialism and the history of international organizations, Susan Pedersen. The activities of the organization, especially the Secretariat, are usually examined in the international professional literature from the point of view of institutional history, examining the Secretary General and his deputies. Since 2010, the professional literature has increasingly focused on the conceptual and organizational similarities between the League of Nations and the United Nations, while recent researches are focused specifically on the administration and the international staff: examples are Richard Collins, a lecturer in international law at the University of Dublin, and a Danish research group at the Aarhus University, led by Professor Karen Gram-Skjoldager, which examines the history of international bureaucracy, with a strong emphasis on the League of Nations and its Secretariat.

A broader spectrum is given to the issue by the well-known works of Margaret MacMillan, the great-granddaughter of David Lloyd George, who deals primarily with the treaties after World War I.

Interesting new directions open for the research of the organization through the suggestions of the British Niall Ferguson and the American James Srodes, who do not deal specifically with the League of Nations but in their topics, they study its operators, while their research method may be suitable for further study of the operation of the League of Nations.

The above is a good indication that in recent years, international research is paying increasing attention to the League of Nations, which is still a relatively not well studied field. Examining the history and operation of the organization can thus provide a wealth of new data, while through novel questions can provide new approaches to the study the history of multilateral diplomacy and international organizations.

The series of historical analyzes made specifically in connection with the Hungarian representation at the League of Nations was started by the historian unavoidable when researching the foreign policy of the Horthy era, Mária Ormos, with her works on the admission of Hungary to the League, and on the loan provided by the League of Nations for Hungary. After that, the League of Nations was out of the focus of Hungarian research for a long time, and it appeared mostly in the works of Pál Pritz, who dealt with the Hungarian foreign service between the two world wars.

In the 2000s, Hungarian foreign policy and the League of Nations became central again in Miklós Zeidler's studies on foreign policy in the Horthy era, the Hungarian perception of the League of Nations, Hungarian representation, and the actions of Hungarian minorities before the League of Nations.

Concerning the foreign policy of the era crucial works were provided by Magda Ádám and Ignác Romsics, as well as Balázs Ablonczy, head of the Lendület Trianon 100 Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, whose main research field is the Hungarian foreign policy between the two world wars, and Gergely Fejérdy, who deals with international relations and French-Hungarian and Belgian-Hungarian relations.

Also deals with sub-topics related to the League of Nations Zoltán Peterecz, who processes the work of Jeremiah Smith and Royall Tyler, and Petra Hamerli, who deals with Italian-Hungarian relations. The continuously

published works of the Trianon 100 Research Group also bring a lot of novelties to the research of the League of Nations – such is the study of Zsombor Bódy, a member of the research group dealing with social history and social policy on the International Labour Organization and its Hungarian staff, and the paper of a historian dealing with Hungarian refugees after Trianon, István Gergely Szűts on the issue of optants.

The research of the Hungarian minority efforts at the League of Nations is also helped by the works of Ferenc Eiler, who deals with German and Hungarian minorities and minority policy, and those of Máté Gali, who deals with the life of Albert Berzeviczy.

The works of László Gulyás seeking to summarize Hungarian foreign policy between the two world wars, and Edvard Beneš, along with the publications of Imre Tóth dealing with Kálmán Kánya and the Austrian-German-Hungarian diplomatic relations, also add important details to the picture.

All this – the literature I also use in my dissertation – allows us to get an increasingly complex picture of the topic, about which, however, many questions remain open. With the present doctoral dissertation, I would like to contribute to answering these, raising some aspects that have been less studied so far, and outlining further possible research directions.

Methodology

In order to achieve the aims of the dissertation, in accordance with the methodology of historical science, I used both library and archival research, supplemented by research on digital archives and websites available on the Internet. After the library and internet research, I processed the Hungarian, English and French language works presented above, which have been published on the topic so far. To explore the archival source material in Hungarian, English and French, I researched in the National Archives of Hungary (MNL OL) in Budapest, the League of Nations Archives (LON) kept at the United Nations Office in Geneva, and the Manuscript Archive of the National Széchényi Library at Budapest. Of the digitized archives available on the Internet, I primarily used the Hungarian Telegraphic Office database (MTI news archive 1920-1945). Of these, the MNL OL, the LON, and the MTI archives provide serious source material. Finding, photographing, organizing, and processing the vast amount of document thus collected required considerable energy and a great deal of time.

The MNL OL essentially preserves the materials of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian Office in Geneva, while the archives of the LON contain mainly the documents of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. These are supplemented by the press releases published by MTI, as well as the ordinary memoirs and memoranda kept in the MNL OL and the OSZK Manuscript Archive (by Sándor Khuen-Héderváry and Pál Hevesy), as well as the memoirs signed and published by the press (Miklós Horthy and György Barcza), which I also use in the dissertation. In addition to these, I also relied on contemporary publications and other press products promoting the League of Nations or published under the auspices of the League of Nations. The primary sources, according to various aspects have thus been written, which in themselves helped the source criticism, to the already existing professional literature provides additional points of references.

The search and process of the primary and secondary sources used enabled to reconstruct new, hitherto unexplored events, to examine and analyze them, to draw conclusions based on them, and finally to outline the potential perspectives of further research.

The main question formulated in my dissertation was based on an approach focusing on operational mechanism of the international organization, the strategy followed by Hungarian diplomacy, and the role of networks. Answering this also required political, institutional, diplomatic, and biographical research. With regard to the League of Nations, I examined the theoretical operation together with those implemented in practice, enabling to show the contradictions between the two. After completing these researches, the basic information was compiled, which allowed me to examine together the system-level operation, the strategy used by Hungarian diplomacy, as well as the activities of the persons operating the system or intend to prevail in it and the representation of Hungarian issues before the League of Nations. Based on this, I defined the routes of advocacy and examined their efficiency in addition to the results of the representation of Hungarian cases before the League of Nations. In terms of its structure, the dissertation is organized around these central themes. I drew my final conclusions from a joint examination of these.

Overall, I think I have been able to answer the question posed at the beginning of the research and produce a dissertation containing new research findings that will also open further perspectives.

New results

In order to be able to explain and interpret the forms and possibilities of Hungarian representation, the dissertation begins with a brief introduction to the new diplomatic system and the founding and operation of the League of Nations, with a separate analysis of the system created by the first Secretary General, Sir Eric Drummond. After that, it shows the birth of the independent Hungarian foreign policy and ministry, the admission of Hungary to the League of Nations, and then the actual representation at the League of Nations: the establishment and operation of the Hungarian Secretariat in Geneva, the Hungarian officials working at the League, and the Hungarian delegations sent to the Sessions of the Council and the Assembly.

The presentation of the establishment and operation of the Hungarian Secretariat in Geneva, as well as the careers and networks of Mihály Réz, Zoltán Baranyai and Pál Hevesy, who played key roles in the establishment and running of the Office, is one of the most important new results of the dissertation, providing important additions to the research and further analysis of Hungarian diplomacy in the 1920s.

The study of the composition of the delegations to the sessions of the League of Nations in the 1920s and that of Geneva as a meeting place also revealed new results, exposing how the acquisition of information and the use of independent networks were intertwined with official representation. Both had to be effective in order to succeed in the given case.

Examining the personnel composition of the representation, we can therefore see that professional diplomats, experts from various sectors (minority affairs, military, law, etc.) and politicians also took an active part in it and helped each other's work. They followed a coordinated strategy, which was largely due to the strong action of the Geneva office in this regard. Mihály Réz and Zoltán Baranyai were the ones who managed to be able to comment on all the documents submitted to the League of Nations in advance and, if necessary, to improve them in accordance with the requirements of the League. Hungarian diplomacy therefore had to accept that the materials it produced were sometimes formulated according to a different system of arguments in line with the ideas of the League, as well as that there were issues such as e.g. the territorial revision, which could not be brought before the League of Nations in any form. In this way, the League of Nations was able to function as a means of achieving Hungarian goals – this was successful in many cases in the 1920s, while often it was not.

Finally, the dissertation takes a closer look at some of the Hungarian cases brought before the organization specifically from the point of view of the representation to the League. Here, after a general overview, I selected the financial recovery of Hungary, considered to be a success story, the minority issue that remained unsolved for almost ten years, and finally a political affair, the case of the Szentgotthárd arms consignment, to implement a more detailed research. As by examining the three cases of different nature and with different results, a nuanced picture can be drawn of the League of Nations and the success of the Hungarian representation to it.

Closely related to the dissertation are the two tables in the appendix, which in this form summarize for the first time the Hungarian delegations to the sessions of the Council and the Assembly from the admission of the country to 1930, including the personal composition, goals, and effectiveness of the delegations.

Regarding the key figures of the Hungarian office in Geneva, we can conclude that at Geneva the Hungarian interests were represented by Mihály Réz and Zoltán Baranyai, both professors and specialists who spoke languages well, as opposed to professional diplomats working at the Hungarian embassy in Bern.

With Baranyai, an intellectual was appointed next to the League of Nations who did not study to be a diplomat, and neither his family background nor his private capital could rival that of most diplomats of the era.

He owed his career to his expertise, his self-created networks, his knowledge of the League of Nations' system, and his attitude to Hungarian affairs, especially to the minority issue. We can find its clear success in these and in the fact that he was able to assess very quickly how the Hungarian goals could be enforced in the forum of the League of Nations. By contrast Pál Hevesy, who took over the secretariat in 1926, was a professional diplomat from a wealthy family.

The two key figures of the Hungarian secretariat in Geneva in the 1920s, Pál Hevesy and Zoltán Baranyai, were both well acquainted with the operation of the system, understood, and spoke the language used by the League of Nations, and had a constantly growing network of personal contacts.

Regarding the Hungarian officials working in the organization of the League of Nations, the dissertation outlines, based on the available resources, who worked in the various departments, who the Hungarian authorities wanted to place in the organization and the outcome of these attempts. However, it cannot be said that the list is complete, so with new sources, the data in my thesis will certainly be expandable.

Through some examples, the dissertation also shows how the Hungarian leadership chose whom to recommend for a position when a position became vacant, and how it all happened in practice.

The next chapter describes the next, most obvious form of Hungarian representation – and enforcement of interests – the representation at the sessions of the Council and the Assembly. The Assembly held its sessions in September each year, and we may also find extraordinary Assemblies on a few occasions. At the beginning, Council meetings were rather hectic, but by 1924-25 quarterly meetings held in March, June, September and December became usual. It is true for all the Council sessions held in September that, although only those authorized were attending and speaking at the Council meetings, delegates who came to the Assembly could also take part in the prior talks. We also often find examples that, in addition to the official delegation, a key Hungarian politician or diplomat came to the city specifically to conduct these talks.

In terms of the size of the delegations, while in September 1923 only seven people were members of the Hungarian delegation to the Assembly, at the September 1930 Assembly the Hungarian government was represented by 21 people. As the number of delegates was maximized to three, the other outgoing persons appeared in deputy, secretary and technical advisory positions. This increasing number enabled the delegates to participate in the work of specialized committees in a more differentiated way – this ‘specialization’ allowed them to be more prepared having more detailed knowledge, to be more efficient and to develop a better and wider targeted network in order to achieve the Hungarian goals.

The members of the delegations varied on a case-by-case basis, depending on what topic came up and how important the topic or the particular trial was. However, the selection of the members of the delegation was of course not ad hoc and, for practical reasons, it also had permanent members. Such were the head of the delegation, the internationally recognized and highly respected Albert Apponyi, and the members of the Geneva Secretariat, Hevesy and Baranyai. We can talk about the same, practically permanent membership in the case of those who specifically came to the meetings for years to represent only one case.

Thus, the cases, the procedures followed by the League and the negotiation methods and tactics used were as well known for them as the representatives of other states acting in similar cases, and as other international actors who were receptive to the issue, supported or opposed to the Hungarian cause.

In this way, the delegates also ‘formed’ subdivisions of networks organized along certain topics (e.g. minority protection) and operated independent networks, covering as fully as possible the issues they represented - not only within the League of Nations, but also in other forums (League of Nations Union, other international conferences, etc.). These professional networks were complemented by the network that was the quasi-basic contact capital of delegates, who were largely made up of members of aristocratic or magnate families: on a kinship and friend basis, or even through their education.

Over the years, the Hungarian government has recognized this operation, therefore, it sought to send semi-permanent members to the meetings and, precisely because of the above, increased the number of outgoing delegations, quasi-specializing the participants. Thus, the delegates arriving in each case were able to follow the resolutions published on the given topic, current issues of debate, their status, potential supporters of Hungarian goals, etc.

Those attending the meetings can therefore be divided into four groups: the general, ‘ordinary’ delegates, who, in addition to Hungarian issues, were well acquainted with the operation of the League of Nations, its employees and the delegates of the other states; professionals who arrived to discuss a specific issue; or, in special cases, the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The fourth group consists of cases where substantive discussions have already taken place by the start of the session and no discussion was expected – in these cases the head of diplomatic corps in Geneva or Bern, or another ambassador accredited to another city was simply entrusted with the representation.

In the 1920s key members of the Hungarian delegation to the League were Albert Apponyi permanent head of the delegation; his wife, Klotild Mensdorff-Pouilly; Gábor Tánczos, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs; Lajos Walko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs; from the diplomats Frigyes Korányi Jr., László Gajzágó, Antal Ullein-Reviczky and György Barcza; János Bud, the Minister of Finance; József Szterényi, former Minister of Trade, Colonel Géza Siegler, and the lawyer Ervin Vladár.

As a conclusion from the above list, it can be affirmed that the delegates were prepared and trained politicians, diplomats and professionals (the latter mainly from the financial and military fields), familiar with the issues in question. Amongst them we can also find both employees of a Hungarian Ministry and officials in foreign service. Many of these diplomats, rejecting an exclusive German orientation, took an active part in Miklós Kállay's search for a way-out during World War II, and resigned one after the other following the appointment of the Sztójay government in late 1944. After 1945, almost all of them were forced to emigrate and settled in different parts of the world.

The dissertation also briefly but specifically addresses the central role of Geneva. The personal presence of Member States' prime ministers, presidents or foreign ministers at the sessions was not common but was relatively frequent when key issues were discussed. The top management arriving to the city negotiated at private meetings as well as at the sessions. Therefore, the Hungarian leadership was also forced to place the importance of representation in front of financial problems and to book accommodation for the delegation in those exclusive hotels where did the representatives of the great powers. Thus, the prime minister or ministers occupied by the Grand Hôtel Beau-Rivage or the Grand Hotel de la Paix could easily have discussions over a coffee with almost anyone: whether the issues being discussed by the League of Nations or not.

The role of the Hungarian representation to the League of Nations was fundamentally influenced by the foreign policy issues, which could have been submitted to the organization at all. From the Hungarian point of view, the primary goal at the time of admission was to revive diplomacy, which the League of Nations maximally fulfilled. The next great success was the financial reconstruction of the country based on the loan provided by the League of Nations, without which the Bethlen consolidation could hardly have been successful. Although the territorial revision could not be brought before the League, the border adjustments, the issue of detached railways or minority issues could. The issues of border disputes and fragmented railways can be summarized relatively briefly, and their resolutions were also relatively quick. The issue of financial reconstruction has also proceeded quickly and, in fact, smoothly. This was not the case however for the minority issues, and the matters of financial control and military control – these were much more complex cases with many stakeholders representing different sides and interests. In the system of the League of Nations, such matters could drag on for a long time without a real solution.

For this reason, the dissertation discusses more detailed the representation at the League in three cases: the financial reconstruction of Hungary, the minority affairs, and the case of Szentgotthárd arms consignment. The advocacy in other Hungarian issues before the League of Nations is only briefly described in the paper.

The situation of minorities, a problem affecting several nations and states across Europe, was referred to the competence of the League of Nations by the peace treaties following the First World War. As a result of the Trianon borders, the issue of minority rights of the Hungarian population stranded outside the new borders was among the first to be brought before the League of Nations by the Hungarian side. With regard to minorities, however, the decision was postponed, and thus a game that lasted for almost a decade began between the Hungarian government and the supporters of the Hungarian minorities, the Little Entente and the parties. With regard to minority issues as a whole, in the 1920s Hungarian petitions were either completely stalled or, although discussed,

the number of negotiators was constantly narrowed, and the desired results could not be achieved by minorities within the League of Nations.

The dissertation follows the development of the cases in which the Hungarian government deputed official delegates to the sessions of the League of Nations. It was not only, or even not primarily, the Hungarian government that officially intervened in the protection of the Hungarian minorities: often the delegates of the given minority or a Hungarian (but not necessarily from the Kingdom of Hungary) organization embracing their cause approached the League of Nations, and as a result, of course, they also took part in the sessions discussing the issue. Nonetheless, these cases were generally harmonized with the goals of the Hungarian government, which sought to coordinate and support these issues from the background, and thus to build and manage the entire Hungarian minority protection along a single strategy, without going into all its details.

Among the minority issues, the Hungarian government placed outstanding emphasis on the complaints of Hungarian optants of Transylvania. The Romanian government, referring to the land reform introduced in 1921, began to expropriate and distribute the lands of the Hungarian optants. In March 1923, the Hungarian government submitted to the League of Nations a petition alleging that Romania was expropriating the property of Hungarians who had opted, in violation of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Trianon. This marked the beginning of a protracted debate, presented in detail in the dissertation, which has widened over the years. This debate has been about the relationship between the currently emerging international law and the domestic law of the states, namely whether an international court could override a domestic law of a state. The Hungarian position in this regard was clear yes, while the Romanian position was clear no. Although the League of Nations never took a position on this openly and definitively, in practice the position taken by Titulescu won.

Regarding the minority issues, the Hungarian leadership did not expect the Council to decide, as it would not have been authorized to do so, being the dispute a legal issue. The Hungarian aspiration for the Council and the League of Nations was to help reach a legal solution to the issue: either by declaring the jurisdiction of the joint arbitral tribunals or the Permanent Court of International Justice.

In connection with this, the Hungarian diplomacy tried to reform the system in three main lines of bearing. The first was to deepen the involvement of petitioners in the negotiation process - to a minimum, this has happened. The second would have been to ensure that the cases in question could actually be brought before the Permanent Court of International Justice, whose decisions should have been accepted by the parties. Although this would have been a possible scenario in principle throughout, in reality it was almost never fulfilled, and the cases were instead referred maximum to the Legal Section of the Secretariat. This meant that the cases were not brought before an independent court capable of making a purely legal decision – for political reasons. This was changed by the resolution of the 1930 Hague Conference. The third non-Hungarian initiative, but also supported by Hungarian delegates, was to set up a permanent committee, similar to the Permanent Mandates Commission, specifically for minority issues – instead, however, the Minorities Section within the Secretariat, although growing in terms of staff, remained.

Thus, the system could only be reformed in the late 1920s – until then, the League of Nations steered the parties all the way towards bilateral negotiations and individual compromises.

The work done by the League of Nations in the field of financial and economic stabilization after the First World War was much more successful than that in the field of minority issues. The reason for this is to be found

in the fact that while the minority issue has moved many politically opposed parties, virtually every state had an interest in the economic stabilization of states that had lost and were obliged to pay reparation.

Inflation in Hungary after the First World War and the difficulties of the Hungarian economy severely affected by the Treaty of Trianon, posed a great challenge to the Hungarian government. The economic situation and the Hungarian currency had to be strengthened as soon as possible, so István Bethlen turned to the League of Nations for a loan after the rapid stabilization of the domestic political situation. The Hungarian government was helped by the fact that by the end of 1922 in London it was believed that without a foreign loan Hungary would not be economically and financially viable, causing the state's insolvency regarding its reparations. After lengthy deliberations, on March 14, 1924, the Hungarian government signed a protocol defining the persons entitled to represent the interests of the bondholders of the future loan.

The League of Nations sent a Commissioner-General to Budapest to conduct the financial audit of the loan and the economic and financial reconstruction. Of the several candidates emerging, Jeremiah Smith Jr. of the United States was eventually elected, who arrived in Budapest on May 1, 1924. Royall Tyler, also from the United States, was appointed as his deputy. Smith has since reported to the Council: his monthly report (in which he usually commented positively on the situation in Hungary) was first submitted to a designated committee of the Council and then submitted to the Council for approval.

At the June 1926 session of the Council, Smith again submitted a favorable report in support of the lifting of controls, and Bethlen called for recognition of the stability of Hungary's financial situation, the lifting of financial controls and the release of the 132 million korona remaining from the 250 million korona loan. The committee finally decided to abolish the post of Commissioner-General and the remaining control would be entrusted to two people by the creditors, who would, however, be represented in Budapest by only one official. This representative became Smith's deputy, Royall Tyler, whose new task was to oversee Hungarian finances, albeit not as markedly as the Commissioner-General, and to continue to act as a sort of liaison between the lenders and the Hungarian government. From then on, Tyler became the one who summarized his findings in quarterly reports and whose approval was required for all Hungarian plans for the remainder of the loan.

At the September 1926 session of the Council, Pál Hevesy, on behalf of the Hungarian government, could declare that the financial reconstruction of Hungary had been completed. With this, the country's financial control may have loosened considerably, and three years later Tyler's term expired: he left Budapest in June 1929, and almost a year later, with the termination of the audit committee, financial control over Hungary fully ended.

The country's successful financial reconstruction proceeded quickly and smoothly despite the franc counterfeit scandal, as part of which the country not only managed to balance its budget, but even produced a surplus. Inflation has ceased, the currency has stabilized, the Hungarian National Bank has been established, foreign capital inflows have started, and household savings have started to increase. It was a success story – both in the cases of Austria and Hungary – that not only was considered an outstanding achievement by the two economically stabilized countries, but the League of Nations was also proud of it and it still considered to be one of the important successes it has achieved to date.

The third Hungarian issue before the League of Nations, which is examined in more detail in the dissertation, is the case of the arms consignment in Szentgotthárd. In contrast to the minority issue and financial reconstruction, in this case we are talking about a political scandal that has come before the League of Nations for

investigation and, like the issue of optants, has been the subject of a wider debate on the functioning and the possessed powers of the League of Nations.

On January 1, 1928, the Austrians seized an illegal arms consignment at the Szentgotthárd railway station. According to its papers, the sender of the weapon parts, said to be machine parts, was an Italian company in Verona, the recipient was a Warsaw company, and its intermediate station was Nové Mesto, i.e. Sátoraljajhely – the former two were fictitious. On February 1, 1928, the Romanian, Czechoslovak, and Yugoslav governments handed over a memorandum to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, asking the Council to discuss the case. In the Szentgotthárd case, the aim of the Little Entente was to send an investment committee, while Sándor Khuen-Héderváry and Gábor Tánczos, who were negotiating in Geneva, tried to convince everyone of Hungary's innocence.

On 23 February 1928, the Secretary General of the League of Nations, Eric Drummond, forwarded to István Bethlen a letter from the President of the Council, Cheng Lo, Ambassador of China to Lisbon, calling on the Hungarian Prime Minister to take concrete actions, which Bethlen refused. This moment received particular attention because, in this case, the President-in-Office of the Council acted between two sessions on a matter which had been referred to the Council, but as the Council was not expected to meet until March, it had not yet taken any resolution. The question was: does the President-in-Office of the Council have the right to act independently as President of the Council, but not on the basis of a Council decision and not during a Council meeting, i.e. how much power and authority can the President of the Council of the League of Nations have?

The Council finally set up a committee to investigate the arms consignment case, of which the Netherlands, Chile and Finland became members. The designated committee requested the necessary information from the Hungarian government and, through Drummond, appointed two experts from the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions and the Transit Committee to assist in the work of the tripartite committee and to deal with the case as professionals during the investigation. The investigative committees set up held a visit to Szentgotthárd, known in more detail from the notes of Ervin Vladár, which is processed in the dissertation.

At the Council meeting in June 1928, it was decided not to pursue further investigation into the matter against Hungary. The same meeting also adopted the proposal, drawn up by this tripartite committee, to extend the powers of the President of the Council. The Hungarian government, which had the benevolence of the Polish and the help of the Italians in the matter, therefore skillfully played the legal loophole in the operation of the League of Nations, and in the end the government was not blamed for more than what was said at this council meeting – however, all this required the will of the British and Germans too.

In the case of the arms consignment in Szentgotthárd, although the Little Entente and France as its supporter took their protests to the League of Nations, the Hungarian government came out of the scandal relatively well, mainly thanks to the strong support of the British and secondarily that of the Italians and Germans. However, these games often took place not in the sessions of the League, not even in Geneva, but in other forums of international political battles.

In connection with the review of the topics presented above and the related representation of the League of Nations, which is examined in detail in the dissertation, it is also clear that the Council and the Assembly of the League of Nations were important forums, but by no means the only one. The organization was part of the crisis

management system of the era and, as such, could not make its own decisions, either within its organization and in the international relations, without the will or against the will of the great powers. Many of the decisions made on these issues were made according to the will of politically influential states but within the League of Nations, while many were made even formally outside the League at another international conference. Thus, multilateral diplomacy was actually born, and by the end of the decade, the Hungarian representation to the League of Nations had adapted perfectly to this system.

Overall, the dissertation concludes that, compared to the system of the League of Nations, Hungarian diplomacy – as well as the foreign affairs apparatus of other states – sought to seek and make the best possible use of advocacy opportunities. This was not an easy task, yet the Geneva office realized at the time of its establishment that it was not possible to achieve the Hungarian goals without linking them to ideas that had just been formulated by the founders of the League of Nations, and which, thanks to the continuously broadcasted meetings, were able to reach the public extremely quickly. The strategy of the Hungarian diplomacy was partly based on this – however this alone, without political supporters, was few.

Based on the presented, the dissertation concludes that the Hungarian political goals could prevail in the League of Nations if the Hungarian arguments were formally and legally correct, and if a larger supporter was also won by the Hungarian government to the cause. However, this was of an ad hoc nature: in the 1920s, the country did not have such political power or fixed political supporters that could make a series of decisions favorable to Hungarian goals.

As a general summary of the results of the dissertation: it was able to answer the questions posed and brought many new results in a hitherto little researched topic. The dissertation, which focuses specifically on the Hungarian representation at the League of Nations, presents and analyzes the League of Nations and the Hungarian representation running on multiple threads in operation. The presentation of the Geneva office and its staff, as well as the composition of the Hungarian delegations, the topics they represented along with their success will be a useful basis for further research on even some sub-topics.

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