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**Role of head of state and national coat of arms during the
threatened democracy (1945–1948)**

THESES OF DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

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1. CONTEXT AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

The two main themes of the dissertation are the history of the role of the head of state and the appearance of the state coat of arms in Hungary, after the Second World War and before the total communist dictatorship. Zoltán Tildy (1889–1961) – the second president of the Republic in the Hungarian history – began his career as a Reformed (Calvinist) pastor. He was an active organizer of the Independent Smallholders' Party (founded in 1930), in which he played the leading and decisive role throughout. Tildy was the Prime Minister of Hungary, serving from 1945 until 1946, then he was the elected President of Hungary.

The dissertation pays special attention to the history of the office of the head of state, while mentioning the most well-known questionable cases regarding Tildy. The primary goal of the exploration is to understand the role of the Hungarian head of state between 1945 and 1948.

Tildy's role at the head of the Hungarian state is often referred to as 'weak', and his excessive leniency towards the communists and the Soviet Union is often criticized. Based on the sources, it can be said that his family was the most important for him, at the same time his wife had a strong influence on his political career.

One of the historical forms of the Hungarian coat of arms called the 'Kossuth coat of arms' – which was named after Lajos Kossuth, in this period – raises a number of questions. Perhaps the most important is

the complex problem of the relationship between this symbol and the republican form of government. Hungary officially became a republic in 1946, but there was no coat of arms regulation. Zoltán Tildy, who was the President of the Republic of Hungary, started to use the so-called Kossuth coat of arms. Over time, this practice became customary law.

2. METHODOLOGY

The history of Hungary in the 20th century is essentially also the history of regime changes. In 1920 the Treaty of Trianon was a tragedy for Hungary, but the Hungarian state regained the independence it had lost centuries before. In 1944 Germany, in 1945 the Soviet Union invaded the country. The total establishment of communist power had begun at that time. Professor Dr Sándor M. Kiss names the period between 1945 and 1948 the threatened democracy. The dissertation examines the role of the Hungarian head of state and the history of the coat of arms of Hungary in this time period. Finally, it presents the history of Zoltán Tildy and the so-called Kossuth coat of arms in 1956.

The research tries to go 'layer by layer' and explore the topic from different points of view. The structure of the dissertation was developed accordingly. First, it presents the public law aspects, the changes in the organization of the state, and the politics of symbols. Then it presents the life of Zoltán Tildy, the most important events, his family, his church, his party and his colleagues, supplemented by the use of international and emigration Hungarian sources.

3. RESULTS

It appears from the sources that there was a kind of effort to make the first of February the holiday of the republic. For example many employees of the Office of the President of the Republic received state honours on 1 February 1948. At the same time, between 1945 and 1949, the coat of arms of the state was not officially arranged, and the position of the president of the republic was only temporarily tolerated. During the period of the establishment of the communist dictatorship and Hungary becoming a Soviet satellite state, the role of all three dignitaries under public law (head of state, prime minister, speaker) became a formality and had no real significance.

In the course of the research, topics emerged that should be examined in detail. An example of this is the issue of real estates in Pócsmegyer, between the Office of the President of the Republic and some actors in the Government. It would also be worthwhile to comprehensively examine the amnesty applications written to the President of the Republic. The story of Gyula Szeleczy's life is also interesting, who was Tildy's Chief of Protocol. It would also be important to examine Árpád Szakasits' time as head of state. At that time, the position of the President of the Republic was abolished, and then the Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary was established.

The biggest novelty of the dissertation is the list of employees in the Office of the President of the Republic. Novelty to the topic are the materials of the contemporary Romanian Press Monitoring Directorate.

Gyula Szelezky described Tildy as a taciturn, self-absorbed person. According to Töhötöm Nagy, Tildy was a simple man. Erzsébet Rácz stated that Tildy was fully aware that he was 'head of state without rights'. Although Tildy would have preferred to live as a farmer, it was important to him to be recognized as a factor.

The most important things for the Hungarian President were the education, the integration of the peasant society, and the limitation of the power of the Communist Party. Tildy considered the example of Finland to be followed, however, this was not feasible in the situation of Hungary at that time. A more peaceful historical period would have preferred for his habitus and politics.

4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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Albert Zoltán Máté–Bandi István: Tildy Zoltán államfő külföldre juttatásának kísérletei és megbuktatásának külföldi visszhangja a román titkosszolgálati források tükrében. In: *Magyar Szemle*, 2023 (32) 1–2., 85–100.