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## **THE HISTORY OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF MUKACHEVO IN 1848–1849<sup>1</sup>**

The article addresses the problem of role of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo in the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849. Considerable attention is paid to analyze the religious and political activity of Bishop Vasyl Popovych of Mukachevo.

The author highlights that the spring events of 1848 created a new situation in Hungary. First in the history of the country a government accountable to the legislation was formed, whose first measures included the abolishment of serfdom. The so-called «April Laws» of 1848 sanctioned by Ferdinand V, the Habsburg king of Hungary had a great influence on the feudal system. The last Diet of Reform Era adopted laws, which paved a way for the bourgeois transformation of the country.

It is alleged that one of the most important issues was the determination of the relationship between church and state in spring 1848. This time, the relationship between the Batthyány Government and the leaders of the Catholic Church of Hungary was not free from difficulties. The Catholic Church has lost its state religion status.

The history of the Eparchy of Mukachevo in the revolutionary events of 1848–1849 is one of the less researched issues. On the basis of analysis of the review of archival sources and historiography of the topic, it is established that the Eparchy of Mukachevo played an exceptional role in support of hinterland of the Hungarian War of Independence. As noted, it had jurisdiction over seven counties in Northeastern Hungary (Zemplin, Ung, Bereg, Ugocha, Sotmar, Sabolch and Maramorosh) and the Hajdú District populated by Rusyn-, Hungarian- and Romanian-speaking believers. Thus, the Greek Catholic clergy had a strategic role to ensure peace between the different peoples.

The author comes to the conclusion that Bishop Vasyl Popovych and his prelacy trusted in the goodwill of the Hungarian liberal leaders. The bishop focused on the interests of his eparchy in all circumstances.

The years of 1848–1849 were abundant in political and military turns. Popovych was always far from any form of extremism, calmness and prudence controlled his actions. In the end, it is revealed that the Greek Catholic clergy believed: the Hungarian government

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<sup>1</sup> Congrua – term to designate the lowest sum proper for the yearly income of a priest.

wanted to create a country, where the Byzantine rite community gets into a favourable, more honoured position.

**Keywords:** Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo, Bishop Vasyl Popovych, Northeastern Hungary, Lajos Kossuth, Catholic Church of Hungary.

The Hungarian historical interpretation of the role of the Eparchy of Mukachevo in 1848–1849 mainly highlights the clergy's loyalty towards the Hungarian revolutionary government. To support this statement, several examples have been mentioned. On the one hand, they say that the Greek Catholic clergy supported the changes, Bishop Vasyl Popovych asked for his priest to support the revolution, and then the war of independence. On the other hand, these studies usually mention that more than 80 ordained Greek Catholic priests participated as national guard officer, army chaplain and war correspondent in the war (Pirigyí, 1998, p. 156; Gönczi, 2007, p. 15; Bagu, 2010, p. 134).

Contemporaries took down 1848–1849 events in the Northeastern Hungarian region. Gábor Várady, who was the commander of the 105<sup>th</sup> Battalion organized from the Maramures. Voluntary Battalion, describes the everyday life of the county. Maramures populated by more than 80 % Greek Catholics and raises the everyday routine of the locally-recruited soldiers in his collection, «Hulló Levelék» [«Falling Leaves»] (Várady, 1892). Tivadar Lehoczky, who fought as an artilleryman in the main theatre of war of independence and then worked as the attorney general in the Schönborn-domains, mainly drew the public's attention to his archaeological research. The polyhistor published his monograph, «Bereg megye és a munkácsi vár 1848–49-ben» [«County of Bereg and the Fortress of Mukachevo in 1848–49»] in 1899, which real value is its sources (Lehoczky, 1899). Ivan Sylvai, who came from a Greek Catholic priest-family, writes his grammar school pupil's memories about the fateful events of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence and the tsarist intervention. The writer, who published his works under the name of Uriel Meteor, describes the Greek Catholic community's relation to the Hungarian affair (Sylvai, 1938).

The books of György Csatóry and Balázs Bagu are among the works on local history of Transcarpathia (Csatóry, 1999; Bagu, 2010). The fourth chapter of Bagu's volume presents the priests and chaplains of Ung, Bereg and Ugocsa County. In this chapter he mentions Lőrinc Mihályi, the Greek Catholic priest in Maramures county, who served as an army chaplain (Bagu, 2010, p. 135).

The volume of József Ambrus was published at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew the attention to the merits of Greek Catholic priests, who served in the war of independence (Ambrus, 1892). The book of István Bendász stands out from volumes focused on the Eparchy of Mukachevo and the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence (Bendász, 1997). He started his research to write his volume before the nationalization of the Archives of the Eparchy of Mukachevo. The most important value of his work is its sources, which are partly unavailable now. Bendász's volume totally rely on the work «Adalékok Egyházmegyénk történetéhez az 1848–1849. szabadságharc idejéből» [«Sketches to the History of Our Eparchy during the War of Independence in 1848–49»] by János Kozma, which was published at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kozma, 1909). We can read about the life of priests and seminarians in Uzhhorod, who served as national guardsmen, army and military chaplains in the war of independence in the volume of Bendász. István Pirigyí's study mainly focus on the history of the Eparchy of Mukachevo in 1848–1849 (Pirigyí, 1998, pp. 149–164).

A monography entitled «Forradalom és szabadságharc Északkelet-Magyarországon 1848–1849-ben» [«The Revolution and War of Independence in Northeast Hungary in 1848–1849»] by József Solymosi provides the most professional exploration of the military history of the present-day Transcarpathia in 1848–1849 (Solymosi, 2013). This work is the author's PhD thesis, too. Solymosi sometimes refers to the nationality question of the region and the role of the Greek Catholic clergy. However, the author did not use the sources of the State Archives of Transcarpathian Oblast (Ukraine) and he ignored the detailed presentation of the history of the Eparchy of Mukachevo.

Some aspects of the history of the Eparchy of Mukachevo in 1848–1849 have been examined in the publications of the Ukrainian authors. Among them, we can mention the scholarly writings of Athanasius Pekar, Mariia Kashka, and Volodymyr Fenych. A. Pekar's monograph focuses on the history of the Greek Catholic church from the beginnings to its liquidation by the Soviet regime after World War II (Pekar, 1992). The doctoral dissertation of M. Kashka examines ethnopolitical development of the Transcarpathian Rusyns-Ukrainians from the second half of 18th century to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 (Kashka, 2008). The candidate thesis of V. Fenych studies the role of the Greek Catholic Church in the development of sociopolitical and cultural life of Transcarpathia from the canonical erection of the Eparchy of Mukachevo to the year of 1867 (Fenych, 1997).

Studies and writings on the history of the Eparchy of Mukachevo in 1848–1849 did not always rely on primary sources and did not take the basic criteria of modern science into account. Therefore, the majority of the processed primary sources of the topic under study originates from the Berehove Section of State Archives of Transcarpathian Oblast (DAZO). After the Second World War, documents available in Berehove were organized in accordance with the rules of the Soviet filing system. According to this practice, documents of the Eparchy of Mukachevo organized in public archival records in the Fund 151. Brief extract form of the logbook of the Eparchy and its minutes of consistory meetings are placed within the Fund of the Eparchy of Mukachevo. These sources are indispensable for this study.

It was also necessary to conduct research in the archives in Budapest and Esztergom. Among the sources of the National Archives of Hungary, the documents of the Archives of the Ministry of 1848–1849 were examined, which can be found in the form of microfilm. Relevant sources of the documents of Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, Committee of National Defence, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education proved to be useful to understand the contemporaneous events. In the Esztergom Primate Archives, János Hám and János Scitovszky archbishops' documents concerning the Eparchy of Mukachevo were processed.

On the eve of events in 1848–1849, the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo faced several challenges. The position of the bishopric was determined by the controversial relationship with the Viennese Court. The Consistory of Uzhhorod was grateful for the support of the Habsburgs to the canonisation of the Eparchy in 1771. With Empress Maria Theresa's substantial support the Eparchy of Mukachevo was assigned to the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Esztergom, eliminating the bishop of Eger's influence on the Uniates (Pekar, 1992, pp. 59–61; Fenych, 1997, pp. 4–5, 32–33).

Before the revolutionary events of 1848, the government structure of the Kingdom of Hungary did not favour the Greek Catholics. The Latin rite officials were commissioned to administer issues of the Greek Catholic believers in Locotential Council departments, who did not care about the representation of the interests of the Rusyn-dominated Eparchy of

Mukachevo. Because these officials were mostly Roman Catholic, the distrust of the followers of Byzantine rite was growing against the Latin Church leaders (Molnár, 2018, p. 127). The Consistory of Uzhhorod faced another challenge: its clergy were accused of Panslavism and friendly relationship with the Russian tsar according to the growing nationalist ideas in the Hungarian Reform Era. These accusations proved to be unfounded. The eparchy's lowest efforts to represent its interests induced disproportionate protests of the Hungarian nobles (Tereshkovets, 1907, pp. 268–285; Zsatkovics, 1908, pp. 72–73).

From 1838, the leader of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was Vasyl Popovych, who had gained a 16 year church-administration experience in the Eparchy of Prešov. Popovych achieved substantial result in the late Reform Era. Significant eparchial building projects were realized, incomes of different foundations and benefits of priests' widows and orphans considerably increased (X., 1860, pp. 133–134; Molnar, 2016, pp. 175–182).

The 1848–1849 events had intense influence on the Eparchy of Mukachevo. After the March 15<sup>th</sup> Revolution in Pest the first accountable government was formed led by Count Lajos Batthyány, a progressive leader of the Hungarian Upper House, as Prime Minister of Hungary. Bishop Vasyl Popovych and his consistory supported the political changes (Bendász, 1997, pp. 18–19; Pirigyí, 1998, p. 150). This fact was of considerable importance because the Eparchy situated in Northeastern Hungary had numerous Rusyn, Romanian and Hungarian population. During the whole time of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence in 1848–1849, this area was in the background as a side theatre of war and did not experience major clashes or occupation. The Eparchy of Mukachevo functioned as a hinterland of the War of Independence and after the moving of the Lajos Kossuth-led Committee of National Defence from Pest to Debrecen, it became the direct hinterland. Thus, the clergy had a strategic role to ensure peace between the different peoples in the counties of Northeastern Hungary (MNL OL-1; Várady, 1892, p. 108; Lehoczky, 1899, pp. 58–59; Solymosi, 2013, p. 49).

Bishop Vasyl Popovych and his clergy intended to cooperate the Hungarian power grown out of the March Revolution. The Consistory of Uzhhorod conjured the clergy and the faithful to support the Batthyány Government and to maintain the public security and order in circular letters in Spring 1848. After the sanction of April Laws with the aim of modernizing the Kingdom of Hungary into a parliamentary democracy and nation state, Greek Catholic parish priests explained the mostly illiterate followers how to interpret laws. The Greek Catholic clergy had an important role in the consolidation of the position of the first accountable Hungarian government (Bendász, 1997, pp. 18–19; Fenych, 1997, pp. 71–75).

With the events turned into war of independence, the clergy provided more and more tasks. In autumn 1848, Romanian settlements in Maramures County, and at the beginning of 1849 some part of the population of Rusyn villages located close to the Galician border showed signs of hostility against the Hungarian power. The external instigating forces were the common point in these ethnic unrests. The lack of considerable stationing Hungarian troops favoured the expansion of the riot of the dissatisfied people (ДА30-2; ДА30-6; Solymosi, 2003, pp. 62–66; Molnár, 2010, pp. 121–130). Arriving Hungarian military reinforcements and Government Commissioner Gábor Mihályi cooperating with the Greek Catholic clergy pacified the local nationalities in a relatively short time. These steps managed to prevent escalating nationalities conflict, to ensure the peace in the Northeastern Hungarian hinterland and to maintain the smooth local administrative and military recruitment actions (ДА30-8; MNL OL-2; Csatóy, 1999, p. 64).

Besides, certain caution can be discovered in Bishop Vasyl Popovych's behaviour. Sources and his written defence before imperial-royal authorities confirmed this fact. It is important to mention that his position was basically determined by the presence of Hungarian authorities in Uzhhorod until August 1849. The only real possibility was the cooperation with the Hungarian authority in this situation (EPL-2).

Popovych emphasizes in his written defence that he intended to avoid direct confrontation with the Viennese Court, therefore he refused to be the member of the parliamentary delegation of Bratislava to Vienna in the middle of March 1848. The Greek Catholic bishop left Pest on 17 September, 1848 and he never returned back to participate in the work of Upper House of the Hungarian Parliament (EPL-2). All in all, he was a bishop, who only focused on the interests of his eparchy in all circumstances. The years of 1848–1849 were abundant in political and military turns. Popovych was always far from any form of extremism, calmness and prudence controlled his actions. The maintenance of the compromise between the Viennese Court and the Hungarian government reached in spring 1848 would have been the most ideal situation for him. The bishop probably did not encourage his priests and seminarians to replace their cassocks to military uniforms. Consequently, he was sure that his objection could induce the resentment of the Hungarian leading circles.

Bishop Vasyl Popovych was willing to adapt to changes in 1848 and to stand up for the affair of the war of independence, but he raised his voice firmly and successfully against the expropriation of the seminar in Uzhhorod by the Hungarian army (ДАЗО-3, арк. 152–153). Incidentally, he had to celebrate a mass for the independence of Hungary in Uzhhorod (Hermann, 1996, pp. 322–323; Ungvár, 1849). At the end of July 1849, he dedicated flags of some battalions of Lajos Kazinczy Division staying in the town (Várady, 1884, pp. 1–2; Bendász, 1997, p. 65; Pirigyi, 1998, pp. 150–151).

These acts had to be carried out, if he had refused to implement them, he would have feared retaliation. The bishop responsible for his priests and followers could not risked it. Thus the leadership of the eparchy after the dethronement of the House of Habsburg-Lothringen also implemented the decrees of the Hungarian cabinet (Bendász, 1997, pp. 30–31; Sylvai, 1938, pp. 40–41; Kashka, 2008, p. 132). Because of the Russian intervention, the Szemere Government announced crusade, fasting and procession (Horváth, 1865, pp. 86–88; Erdődy & Hermann, 2002, p. 276). The Bishop of Mukachevo probably pulled till the last, because he thought he could best look after his eparchy with his instructions. It was typical for his caution that he did not want to deal with divisive matters such as marriage of priests and organization of the synod of the eparchy during the war of independence (ДАЗО-5).

The «April Laws» of 1848 provided significant possibilities for the Eparchy of Mukachevo. Bishop Vasyl Popovych and his high priesthood have recognized them relatively soon. During the debate emerged between church and state he definitely supported the Hungarian government. Laws adopted by liberals made promise to finance lower clergy and educational institutions from public funds. If it comes true, it had considerably relieved the large but low income Eparchy of Mukachevo (ДАЗО-3, арк. 199; ДАЗО-7; Sarnyai, 2002, pp. 136–146).

In spring 1848 church autonomy movement represented by the Hungarian Catholic Church supported the claim that every diocese provide the needs of clergy and educational institutions from its own funds (MNL OL-3; Sarnyai, 2002, pp. 54–59). Besides, the relationship between Uzhhorod and Esztergom, the centre of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, was

burdened by historical grievances. One of the most cardinal questions of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was the *congrua* issue<sup>2</sup>. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs led by Minister József Eötvös and the Committee of National Defence led by Governor-president Lajos Kossuth had to deal with this longstanding problem. Kossuth considered a strategic issue to gain the support of the clergy serving in the Rusyn-dominated Northeastern Hungarian hinterland as it reveals a letter from Kossuth to Eötvös (Sinkovics, 1957, p. 71). The *congrua* of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was provided by the first quarter of 1849, which was generally viewed very positively by the Greek Catholic clergy (Bendász, 1997, pp. 34–35; Solymosi, 2003, p. 65).

It is another cup of tea, that military expenditures of the country did not allow them to grant the *congrua* any more. An agreement on the apportionment of benefits by the approval of Catholic Church was not reached at the end of 1848 (Sarnyai, 1999, p. 115; Sarnyai, 2002, p. 133). Although it would have been favourable for the Consistory of Uzhhorod, because the share of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was considered to be higher than the level of the internal income of the bishopric.

We can highlight the lobbying intents of Bishop Vasyl Popovych within the government system and church organization. The Catholic Church Department has been already developed within the first accountable Hungarian government, which dealt with the affairs of the Greek Catholics. The leaders of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, József Eötvös and his successor, Mihály Horváth expressed their intention to employ Greek Catholic officials under the above mentioned high authority (ДА30-4; ДА30-5; Hajdu, 1933, pp. 50–53; Bendász, 1997, pp. 20–22).

The Consistory of Uzhhorod was not content with the proposals of the government, the high priesthood fought for establishing an independent Greek Catholic Department within the structure of the ministry. According to their opinion, the Greek Catholics' increased government lobbying can come only true with creating an independent department (ДА30-3, арк. 56–58; MNL OL-3).

Another idea was the establishment of an independent Greek Catholic Metropolitanate, which dates back long historical antecedents (Pekar, 1992, pp. 85–86). In summer 1848, the Consistory of the Eparchy of Mukachevo proposed to establish a Rusyn-dominated archdiocese with the centre of Uzhhorod, which exercise its jurisdiction over Greek Catholic Hungarian and Transylvanian believers, because of the location of the Eparchy, «its most ancient origin» and its multilingual nature (MNL OL-4; EPL-1). It is interesting to mention that the Hungarian, and later the Austrian government circles had the same opinion about this question: they supported mostly the Romanian hierarchs. The Romanian bishops managed to establish a Greek Catholic Archbishop independent from Esztergom in 1854 (Pirigyi, 1990, p. 35; Niessen, 1993, p. 52).

During the events of 1848–1849, the clergy of the Eparchy of Mukachevo made efforts to stabilise the situation in Northeastern Hungary. Around this time, Bishop Vasyl Popovych and his clergy stood up for Hungarian liberal leaders advocating bourgeois transformation. The clergy also achieved great results in the creation and the maintenance of the peace in multi-ethnic population of the Transcarpathian region. The revolutionary events created an opportunity for the Consistory of Uzhhorod to express its demands in several forms. Even though a good relationship was established between the Eparchy of Mukachevo and the Hungarian government, the turbulent period of 1848–1849 left no room for the Greek Catholic clergy to successfully realize their interests.

<sup>2</sup> *Congrua* – term to designate the lowest sum proper for the yearly income of a priest.

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**ДАЗО-2:** Держархів Закарпатської обл., ф. 151 (Правління Мукачівської греко-католицької єпархії, м. Ужгород), оп. 9, спр. 2564, арк. 1.

**ДАЗО-3:** Держархів Закарпатської обл., ф. 151, оп. 9, спр. 2520, арк. 56–58, 152–153, 199.

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**ДАЗО-5:** Держархів Закарпатської обл., ф. 151, оп. 10, спр. 2, арк. 55–60.

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## **ІСТОРІЯ МУКАЧІВСЬКОЇ ГРЕКО-КАТОЛИЦЬКОЇ ЄПАРХІЇ У 1848–1849 РОКАХ**

Розглянуто роль Мукачівської греко-католицької єпархії у подіях Угорської революції та визвольної боротьби 1848–1849 рр. Значну увагу приділено аналізу релігійної і політичної діяльності Мукачівського єпископа Василя Поповича.

Зазначено, що весняні події 1848 р. в Угорщині привели до нової суспільно-політичної ситуації. Констатовано, що вперше в історії країни було сформовано підпорядкований законодавчий орган уряду, серед нагайних заходів якого – ліквідація інституту кріпацтва. Стверджено, що схвалені королем Фердинандом V «квітневі закони» похитнули саму основу феодального ладу, а останні Державні збори епохи реформ розробили таке законодавство, яке відкрило шлях до буржуазних перетворень у країні.

Стверджено, що одним із найсуттєвіших питань весни 1848 р. залишалося визначення формату відносин між державою та Церквою; відносини між урядом Баттяні та Католицькою Церквою не були безпроблемними – католицизм утратив статус державної релігії.

Зауважено, що історія Мукачівської греко-католицької єпархії у 1848–1849 рр. належить до малодосліджених тем. На основі аналізу історіографії й архівних джерел встановлено, що Мукачівська єпархія відіграла унікальну роль у забезпеченні тилу визвольної боротьби Угорщини. Зазначено, що вона охоплювала територію семи комітатів (Земплін, Унг, Берег, Угоча, Сотмар, Саболч та Мараморощ) і Гайдуцького округу, де проживало підпорядковане їй русько-українське, угорське та румунське населення. Констатовано, що греко-католицьке духовенство відіграло стратегічну роль у забезпеченні міжнаціонального миру в регіоні.

Виснувано, що єпископ В. Попович і його оточення також вірили в добрі наміри угорських лібералів, а перед нами вимальовується образ єпископа, який за будь-яких обставин захищав передовсім інтереси своєї єпархії.

Спостережено, що 1848–1849 рр. були багаті на політичні й військові повороти, В. Попович завжди був далеким від будь-яких виявів крайнього радикалізму, для його вчинків притаманні самовладання та обдуманість. На закінчення розкрито побоювання греко-католицького духовенства: угорська влада хоче створити таку державу, у якій громада візантійського обряду матиме сприятливіші ніж раніше умови існування.

**Ключові слова:** Мукачівська греко-католицька єпархія, єпископ Василь Попович, Північно-Східна Угорщина, Лайош Кошут, Католицька Церква в Угорщині.