

Kazinczy, Ferenc

Hungarian Jacobins in Brno

In: Kazinczy, Ferenc. *Ferenc Kazinczy a Brno : (vězeňský deník Ference Kazinczyho a jeho pobyt v Brně)*. Vyd. 1. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2000, pp. 122-131

ISBN 802102366X

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/123138>

Access Date: 16. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

HUNGARIAN JACOBINS IN BRNO

After the execution of the French king Louis XVI in Paris in January, 1793, the Austrian emperor Francis II set a sharp course in his monarchy, accompanied by a loud counter-revolutionary propaganda and interventions against democratically thinking citizens, which evoked considerable resistance in the progressive circles of Hungary. The most radical against this course were the former backers of josephinism who, after the agreement of Hungarian nobility and the Austrian court became the nucleus of democratic intelligentsia in Hungary and from the connection of this intelligentsia with the representatives of middle nobility, dissatisfied with the compromise with the Vienna court, there arose Hungarian Jacobin Movement which started formulating organisationally in Hungary in the spring of 1794 and which included – like in the Vienna Jacobin circle – writers, advocates, government officials, officers, students, nobility tutors, small country landlords. Many of them worked in the environment of enlightened Catholic and Protestant magnates (such as Ferenc Széchenyi and Gedeon Ráday) in the Hungarian province and state administration, at the university, etc.

The Slovak Jozef Hajnóczy and Ignjat Martinović, of Serbian origin, had the leading role in the Jacobin movement in Hungary. Martinović, under emperor Leopold II, became a secret agent in the service of the Austrian court, which was in connection with his illusions about the role of enlightened absolutism from which he expected the performance of numerous serious social reforms. After emperor Francis's ascension of the Austrian throne and the futile effort at obtaining the ruler's confidence Martinović ceased his collaboration with the Austrian court and in 1792–1793 he began forming his revolutionary concepts. He had the leading role in formulating the programme of the Hungarian Jacobin Movement which he expressed most accurately in his revolutionary catechism written in April and May, 1794, when he also started organising the Jacobin movement in Hungary which quickly obtained backers above all in the Slovak-Hungarian-Romanian regions in the north-east of Hungary, in the Hungarian capital and in the south in Croatia.

The objective of this movement, which also had its centre in Vienna from the year 1793, was to overthrow the Habsburgs and to transform Hungary into a federal republic on the basis of equal rights of all nations of Hungary. For carrying out those plans the Hungarian Jacobins established two societies independent on one another: the Society of Reformers and the Society of Liberty and Equality. The idea of the Society of Reformers arose already in the period of the Hungarian parliamentary movement of 1790–1792; its programme was more conservative and it was to gain above all the nobility. It consisted of the following requirements: to end with the intervention against the French revolution and to transform Hungary into an independent federative republic with the same rights for all nations. The legislative and the executive powers should have been vested in a two-house parliament in which one house should have included representatives of the nobility, in the other one commoners. This programme further required the liberty of trade, thinking and religion, the support of sciences and art, the cut of taxes and the national army. The nobles should have retained their property rights, the subjects should have changed into tenants who would pay rent to landlords in the form of a monetary rent or rent in kind. This point should have been a concession to the requirements of the nobility. The Society of Reformers should have had the first task in the revolutionary campaign: by means of the nobility uprising to fight the independence of the country. The Society of Liberty and Equality, about whose existence the members of the Society of Reformers did not know, should have formed a democratic republic by means of an uprising of broad masses of the population. This society was based on the rights of man – citizen, as pointed out by the Great French Revolution. Particularly noteworthy in the solution of the national problem in the concept of Hungarian Jacobins, expressed besides these main programmes in Martinović's draft constitution of the Hungarian Federative Republic of August, 1793, where it is stated that the planned federation of the nations of Hungary would include, besides the Hungarian part of Hungary, as independent units also the Illyrian province (Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia and Srēm), the Slovak province (with regions of Šariš, Spiš, Turiec, Trenčín, Nitra, Orava, Liptov, etc.) and the Romanian province (Transylvania and Banate). The provinces should have had their own constitutions in accord with the federal constitution and the whole federation a unified army of the whole country. The Catechism of the Society of Reformers of April, 1794 also stated the rights of provinces of using their own languages and religious freedom and the freedom of thinking.

On the whole it can be said that the overall conception of Hungarian Jacobins, although clear-cut Jacobin views appear among them, was nearer the Girondins than the Jacobins in the French revolutionary camp proper. Their programme was in essence a programme of far-reaching social reforms, the radical Jacobin violence was distant to them, and thus not even after the revealing of the Jacobin conspiracy in Hungary many of them did not reckon with such hard recourse on the part of the Austrian court.

A short period of organising the Hungarian Jacobin movement (May - July 1794) did not result in a more perfect building up of the movement and the representatives of the Hungarian Jacobins did not succeed in establishing a close contact with popular masses. The movement had a narrow conspiratory character; every member had the duty of acquiring two new members by means of a copy of the Catechism. Together with the Catechism Hungarian Jacobins disseminated also further revolutionary printed papers and leaflets; significant are their translations of the Marseillaise into Latin (Abaffy), Slovak (Abaffy or Hajnóczy) and Hungarian (Versegly).

After the arrest of Martinović in Vienna in July, 1794 and his confession there began also arrests of his adherents in Hungary. Ferenc Kazinczy was arrested on 14 December 1794. The Viennese court framed up the arrested Jacobins in the spring of 1795 at Buda, a terrorising process in which 18 of the 53 condemned were sentenced to death and 7 were actually executed. Dozens of condemned Jacobins were then transported to the most severe prisons at Kufstein, at Spielberg and other places. On 7 October 1795 Ferenc Kazinczy, József Pruzsinszky, János Rosti, György Szlávý, László Laczkovics, Hans Brehm, Karol Smetanovič, Samuel Vrchovský, Pál Lukács, József Újgyörgyi-Neumüller, Mihály Baranyai, Pál Uza, Ferenc Hirgeist and Domokos Makk were brought to Spielberg castle in Brno. Before them Ján Kopas got there and later Ferenc Versegly, Melchior Sulovský, János Szlávý, János Juhász and Mihály Landerer were brought to Spielberg. The latest Hungarian Jacobin to get there in the years 1815 - 1816 was János Batsányi.

From those prisoners it is possible to mention first József Pruzsinszky (1769 - after 1830), student of law at Pest University (the family of his father came from Pružina in the Trenčín region and was of Slovak origin), who, after the release from the prison in Brno in May 1798 later got a job as a tutor of a significant Hungarian writer and politician József Eötvös. A significant person of the Hungarian enlightenment was Ferenc Versegly (1757 - 1822), who translated into Hungarian the works of Johann Gottfried Herder, Aischylos, Horatius, etc. He also excelled as an aesthete, musical

scientist, poet and linguist; he was an adherent of enlightened classicism. He came to Zábřdovice in April 1798 and was released from there as late as on 28 August 1803. A tragic fate was that of a well-known Hungarian printer Mihály Landerer (1760? - 1807) who, after five-year imprisonment in Brno, got on 11 November 1800 to St. Anne Hospital, from where he was transferred to the mental asylum in Vienna, where, according to Ferenc Kazinczy's testimony, he died in 1807.

Of Slovak origin were Karol Smetanovič (1775 - 1815), Samuel Vrchovský (1770 - 1797), Melchior Suľovský (1752 - ?) and Ján Kopas (1774 - ?). Smetanovič came from Rájec in the Trenčín region and he spent four years of prison in Brno in the years 1795 - 1799. Vrchovský came from Skalica in the Nitra region and in Brno he suffered from serious scrofulosis, of which he died on 3 August 1797 at the Zábřdovice arrest hospital, despite all the help of the physicians. Suľovský, who came from Rakovec on Ondava, and Kopas, born at Šarišské Bohdalovice, district Prešov, were both Evangelics. Suľovský was originally sentenced to death, and after his amnesty he spent more than six years in prison, two years and a half of it in Brno (from the beginning of 1797 to June 1799), whereas Jan Kopas spent in Brno all his punishment from 7 May 1795 to 18 May 1797.

Notable Brno Jacobin prisoners were György Szlavy (1764 or 1765 - 1818) and his brother János Szlavy (1772 - 1840), relative of the Forgách family. György Szlavy was the main magistrate of Bihar province and he served his imprisonment in Brno from October 1795 to June 1798. János Szlavy, who was the judge of the royal court of Somogy region, got to the Brno prison from Graz in April 1797 and remained there until June 1799, when, together with the other Hungarians, he was transported to Kufstein and later to Munkács, from where he got to liberty as late as on 15 January 1803. The long term of prison of János Szlavy, who was originally sentenced to death and then granted amnesty, was evidently due to his carelessness in the prison of Zábřdovice at the beginning of 1798, when he did not want to keep conspiracy with the other prisoners, who agreed with their liberal captors on the secret sending of correspondence, and he sent his letter via one guard for a consideration by post, so that it was revealed by the authorities and in the end it got to Vienna to the emperor, which caused a broad investigation in the prison of Zábřdovice and it affected the liberal curators of the prison, the head Šrámek (Schramek) and the controller Grünersberg.

At the beginning of 1796 also the former Premonstrate monk and army chaplain János Juhász (1761 - 1831), born in Pest, got from Graz to the

Zábrdovice prison. From Zábrdovice Juhász was set at liberty on 4 May 1798, and probably in 1803 he became chaplain in the Chapel of St. Rochus in the hospital of the same name at Buda. Sentenced to death and later granted amnesty was also Ferenc Hirgeist (1772 or 1774 - 1804), student of law from Pest, who spent four years in the Brno prison in the years 1795 - 1799 and then he was imprisoned for more three years at Kufstein and Munkács. After his release from Munkács on 19 September 1802 the backer of the Czech national movement Count František Deym shielded him and immediately after the release from prison he employed him from the end of 1802 to the beginning of 1804 at his demesne at Vodice near Pacov in Bohemia.

At the same time as Hirgeist also the Pest advocate Pál Uza (1763 - after 1824) was imprisoned in Brno in 1795 - 1799 who, the same as Hirgeist, was originally sentenced to death and then granted amnesty, but he spent long eight years in prison until his setting at liberty from Munkács on 27 February 1803. Those four years, in Brno in 1795 - 1799, together with Hirgeist and Uza, was also László Laczkovics (1765 - after 1814), the younger brother of the executed Hungarian Jacobin János Laczkovics. The ex-Paulan Domokos Makk (1755 - ?), surveyor and mathematician in the service of the Esztergom archbishop József Batthyány, on whose assignment he travelled through the Czech Lands and studied the situation of Czech forestry, had a relation to the Czech Lands. It is necessary to note that the archbishop József Batthyány (1727-1799) was a foreign member of the Royal Czech Society of Sciences, and from there also followed his interest in the Czech conditions. Makk was condemned for the participation in the Jacobin conspiracy first to three and after his repeal to two years of prison, which he served in Brno at Spielberg and at Zábrdovice, from where he was released on 16 May 1797.

József Újgyörgyi-Neumüller (1770 - ?), an official of the Royal Hungarian Chamber, who came from Svätý Jur near Bratislava, was condemned for the participation in the Jacobin conspiracy to five years of prison which he served in Brno in 1795 - 1800. From the prison he returned after his release on 4 May, 1800 with broken health, psychically destroyed. Cardinal Migazzi himself, a friend of his family, tried in vain to get him a job, and only on the personal letter of the emperor to the Trnava town council he obtained a job there in 1808 in the orphan's trust money with the income of 400 gulden a year. At Rožnava near Gemer was born Mihály Baranyai (1771 - after 1831), condemned to 5 years of prison which he also served in Brno, first in Spielberg and later at Zábrdovice, from where he was set at

liberty on 2 May 1800 and then he earned his living as tutor at Košice. From October 1795 to 14 May 1796 was imprisoned in Brno the assessor of the Royal Board, born at Szombathely in west Hungary, Pál Lukács (1766 – ?). Only three months, from 7 October 1795 to 16 December 1795 a graduate of Vienna University, a Slovak German, the physician Hans Brehm (1761 – after 1813) spent in the Brno prison. On the other hand, to ten years of prison was condemned the tutor of the sons of Count Sztáray, the mineralogist Ignác Tántsits (1766–1825), who got to Spielberg after being imprisoned at Kufstein, and Graz and was set at liberty as late as on 16 May, 1803.

Literary activity directly in the Brno prison was dealt with by János Rosti (1748 – 1807). Rosti was originally a member of the Jesuitical order and after its dissolution he became the secretary of the Royal Board at Kőszeg, where he was acquired for collaboration with Hungarian Jacobins by Jakab Sigray. In Brno Rosti was in prison from October 1795 to his release in May 1798 and he wrote there two Latin elegies about his stay in the Brno prison. The first was called *Elegiae in carcere scriptae anno 1796* and the second *Elegia ad amicum N., qua occupationes sociorum in captivitate describuntur, anno 1796*. These two elegies are today preserved in the Manuscript department of the Széchényi Library in Budapest, Library No. Ms Quart. Lat. 1594. Rosti's poems reveal outstanding antique education and by their orientation they acknowledge enlightenment classicism. The further fate of János Rosti after his being set at liberty was characteristic. He was employed as an archivist with a well-known enlightened baron Orczy, but after Orczy's death in 1804 Orczy's widow dismissed him from the employment. For the rest of his life he vegetated on the verge of a mental disease. When he learned that the main public prosecutor in the process with Hungarian Jacobins, János Németh, had died, on the very same day, 24 January 1807, he shot himself dead. He should have declared: „I am following you to take my revenge.“ This act of „revenge“ was only a sign of absolute impotence, the knowledge of the impossibility of achieving mundane justice for Hungarian Jacobins.

The most significant literary work in which one can find a detailed description of the imprisonment of Hungarian Jacobins in Brno is no doubt the *Prison Diary (Fogságom naplója)* by Ferenc Kazinczy which arose on the basis of contemporary notes at the distance of several years as late as in 1828, but it was published a hundred years later in 1931. First Kazinczy depicted his arrest by lieutenant Wilhelm Ehrenstein at Regmec on 14 December 1794, when, on the order of the Hungarian paladin Alexander Leopold, he

was brought to Buda, and during the transport further Hungarian Jacobins with military were picked up (Melchior Suľovský, Ignác Tántsits). The journey lasted until 20 December 1794, when Kazinczy was taken over in the Buda prison by Captain Novák (despite his name he was probably not of Czech origin), about whom, in the course of his imprisonment, Kazinczy spoke very positively. He depicted the interrogations from which it followed that Kazinczy was denounced by Suľovský. The public prosecutor János Németh required a death sentence for Kazinczy, which was also approved by the septemviral board in May, 1795. In the meantime, after the process on 20 May 1795 five leading actors of the Hungarian Jacobins were executed, whose execution Kazinczy describes in detail according to contemporary testimonies. Altogether thirteen further Hungarian Jacobins were sentenced to death, among them also Kazinczy who, according to various symptoms thought that the next two to be executed would be himself together with the poet Ferenc Versegly. In the end, however, 11 of the 13 condemned (among whom also Kazinczy) were amnestied and only two victims of the Jacobin process, Óz and Szolártsik, were executed. In the Buda prison the Hungarian Jacobins stayed for more than four months and on 24 September 1795 they were sent to Moravia. After a long journey, when due to the benevolence of their guards they were allowed to walk about Bratislava freely for the whole day they arrived at last in Brno. Kazinczy in his prisoner's diary describes in detail the arrival in Brno, the first months spent in the Spielberg cells from 7 October 1795 to 21 January 1796 as well as the relatively decent experience from Zábřdovice, where they received, within the limits of possibilities, also humanly acceptable care. Together with the other Hungarian Jacobins Kazinczy spent there the time from January 1796 to 22 June 1799, when the Hungarian prisoners, as punishment for a trip of Szlavy, were transported to Kufstein.

The worst time for the Hungarian prisoners was the stay at Spielberg. Kazinczy suffered in the cells full of mould and lack of air and all his body was swollen. In the course of four months he saw the doctor twenty-seven times. Only on the order of the governor Ugarte he got out of there and finally, in January 1796 the Hungarian Jacobins were transferred to a milder prison at Zábřdovice. From Kazinczy's prisoner's diary there follows a relatively favourable picture of his Brno jailers, such as the head of the Zábřdovice prison Šrámek, the controller Grünersberg or the governorate counsel Schröter. In 1799, principal Šrámek and controller Grünersberg were threatened by dismissal from the government service due to their benevo-

lent handling of the Hungarian Jacobins. It was a consequence of the above incident with the inadmissible sending of the correspondence of the jailed Jacobins at which the families of the above jailers assisted. Their wives had a great understanding particularly for the handsome and witty Kazinczy who could stand up energetically for the Hungarian cause. Kazinczy corresponded then for a long time with the wife of controller Grünersberg. Maybe due to the fact that he was favoured by women Kazinczy had different alleviations in jail. In the Zábřdovice prison, thanks to a considerable financial subsidy of his mother he could get a tailcoat and a dressing gown, he could write and draw there and he read a lot. He read the works of Plutarchos, Shakespeare, Goethe, Lessing and dealt in detail with the study of Hungarian grammar. He even translated several dramatic pieces, such as Goethe's tragedy *Clavigo* and Lessing's drama *Emilia Galotti*. In prison Kazinczy realised the impossibility of the revolutionary road under the given conditions, there crystallised his idea of the language renovation, cultural promotion of the nation at the time of political suppression and suppressed liberty, which constituted the essential assumptions also for his future successful political fight.

In his prisoner's diary Kazinczy paid most attention to the Czech environment when describing the transportation from Austrian Kufstein to Munkács where, from August 1800 to June 1801 he spent the last year of his imprisonment. During the transportation, when the Hungarian prisoners travelled almost the whole July in 1800 through the Czech Lands, they were accompanied by a very benevolent military commander; he even enabled them to visit the families of Czech noblemen Puteani and Count Bubna which received and treated the Hungarian Jacobins in a friendly way. Kazinczy explicitly mentions the stay at Kaplice, Veselí, Tábor, Benešov and Prague. On 17 July 1800 from Benešov they made a short trip to Konopiště whose owner at that time was Count of Vrtby. In Prague Kazinczy met a Hungarian domesticated there, the secretary of the Court War Council, Antal Zechenter, the translator of classicist dramas by Corneille and Voltaire into Hungarian. The journey from Kufstein to Munkács belonged evidently among the lightest experience of Kazinczy's imprisonment, and that is why he remembers it so broadly. In his memories of Munkács he several times mentioned the Czech musician Jiří Růžička who was imprisoned with him on one corridor. He states that Růžička composed Polish dances in prison and that he often admired the creative verve, irrespective of adverse conditions. Evidently also Kazinczy's Munkács jailer Ignác Cservenka was Czech.

Interesting is also Kazinczy's assumption that his predecessor in the Munkács cell was an unknown Czech painter condemned for forging banknotes who painted a picture of St. Wenceslas on the wall.

Besides his stay in the prisons at Spielberg and at Zábrdovice and when passing through the Czech Lands, Kazinczy had only little opportunity to meet Czechs. At Gedeon Ráday's senior at Péczel he became acquainted e.g. with the Czech painter Tomáš Klimeš and he also knew well the pioneer of Czech plays, born in Prague, František Jindřich Bulla who, after his departure from Prague, worked for several years as a theatre manager in Hungary; in Bratislava, Košice, Buda and Pest. From Kazinczy's correspondence one gets to know about the esteem in his circles of Count Leopold Berchtold (1759-1809), master of the castle Buchlov and a world-wide known traveller, one of the predecessors of modern sociology whose papers were published in London, Lisbon, Vienna, etc. Kazinczy learned about Czech conditions mostly from the letters of his friends. From Brno József Csehy used to write to him; he got there for a time as a lieutenant of Austrian Army, at Kutná Hora Kazinczy's brother László spent his military service who informed him about Prague which he frequently visited and which Kazinczy learned to know only superficially at the time of his imprisonment during the transport from Kufstein to Munkács. Gábor Döbrentei wrote to him on 27 May 1806 from Wittenberg with a regretful note on the internal conditions in Hungary, how he felt sorry in Prague that the small Czech nation could follow there a theatre performance in its native language, whereas the Hungarians in Pest could not do so, that he heard more often talk Czech in Prague than Hungarian in Pest. With a similar admiration, twenty years later, Ferenc Toldy wrote to him about the famous Queen's Court Manuscript with which he got acquainted by Václav Hanka in the Prague National Museum. On the other hand, the permanent German theatre and the suppression of the Czech element in Brno whose absolute prevalence he witnessed on the way from Bratislava to Brno initiated József Csehy in a letter to Kazinczy to a passionate protest and empathy with the Czech nation ending with the words: „usurpation everywhere is worth hatred“.

Ferenc Kazinczy (1759-1831) was the most significant Hungarian Jacobin imprisoned in Brno. He was the creator of the Hungarian language renovation, his role in the Hungarian national movement corresponded with that of Josef Jungmann in the Czech national movement. Kazinczy became famous not only as writer and translator, but also as a cultural organiser. Of epochal importance is above all his correspondence (published in 23 vol-

umes) by which he participated in the formation of Hungarian cultural life. Kazinczy studied at the reformed college at Sárospatak, where his school-fellow was also the later head representative of the Hungarian reform mission in Bohemia after the edition of the tolerance patent, pastor at Libiř, the writer János Végħ. Kazinczy was a backer of classicism and rationalism, he translated Shakespeare, Rousseau, Herder, Goethe, Lessing and others. He grew at the Slovak–Hungarian borderline where he learned national tolerance in which he was also strengthened by his enlightenment thinking.

Richard Prařák

Z čeřtiny přelořil Bořivoj Herzlík