THE MANY LIVES OF A JESUIT, FREEMASON, AND PHILANTHROPIST

The Story of Töhötöm Nagy

ÉVA PETRÁS

CEU PRESS

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Foreword

> *"Time becomes human time through the interweaving of history and fiction. [...] History reinscribes the time of narrative within the time of the universe."*[1]

Töhötöm Nagy was a Jesuit whose life, full of fateful twists and turns, unknowingly became one of the great epochal witnesses of the twentieth century. His name has found its way into history books, most often in connection with the National Association of Catholic Agrarian Youth Organizations (KALOT) since, along with Fr Jenő Kerkai, he led what became one of the most successful Catholic corporative movements of the last century. But Nagy's historical relevance does not begin and end with KALOT: He crossed no man's land in late 1944 to ensure KALOT's survival by negotiating directly with the Soviet Red Army; and crossed multiple borders again in 1945–1946 to relay news between Rome and Hungary, the Vatican and the Hungarian Catholic Church. Less known, although certainly more monumental, he used these visits to hold secret talks on a possible *modus vivendi* between the Holy See and the Soviet Union on behalf of Pope Pius XII and the Soviet occupation forces in Hungary.

Thus, Nagy's role far surpassed that of an influential Jesuit with a socially directed mission. His ecclesiastical diplomatic hand in the appointment of József Mindszenty as Archbishop of Esztergom is noteworthy; however, this connection would become problematic for him later in life. In an ironic twist of fate, Mindszenty would go on to convince Jesuit leaders not to allow Nagy to return to Hungary from Rome in late 1946. From the eternal city, Nagy's path led instead to South America, where, despite

1 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 180, 181.

continuing his social work, he could not help feeling that he had been exiled. Nagy's personal difficulties catalyzed his professional crisis, ultimately causing him to leave the Society of Jesus in 1948 and wed in Argentina. Following that, he joined the Freemasons in 1952.

The next decade would see Nagy thrust into the tides of history again: He assisted in surveying the slums of Buenos Aires, and being on good terms with the Argentinian Jesuits, was able to bear firsthand witness to the social mission of the South American Church. His book *Jesuitas y Masones* (Jesuits and freemasons), published in Spanish in 1963, and in Hungarian two years later as *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek* brought him even wider recognition. He remained restless, however, even in his new life, which saw him return to Hungary with his family, a move for which Nagy paid a heavy price: He was recruited by the Hungarian State Security Service in 1966 and employed as an undercover agent until his death in 1979.

The present work is the first attempt at a comprehensive biography of Töhötöm Nagy and represents an updated and extended English version of the work published by the same author in 2019 in her native Hungarian.

The musicologist, Alfred Einstein, commenting on the fragmentary nature of biographies remarked that:

> History is not a science in the strict sense. History is always "giving meaning to the meaningless." We never know all the evidence, and we always run the danger of interpreting falsely even that which we really know. We do this in fifty cases out of a hundred. And all biographical writing is even more questionable. We never know a person, his motives and his background, completely. He may be an accomplished hypocrite, and that may be reflected in all his letters and remarks, [...e]ach was given a costume, a mask. We see through the mask, we know only too well the discrepancy between self-portrayal and truth, between mask and face.[2]

Those researching Nagy, or the intrigued reader immersed in this book, are confronted with a similar dilemma. We do not and cannot comprehend all the man knew and experienced, even less so owing to the shape-

2 Einstein, *Greatness in Music,* 101–102.

shifting nature of his life. Fortunately, the multitude of sources available do allow a nuanced biography of him to be written.

A good place to begin is by asking several questions: Who was Töhötöm Nagy? A Jesuit? Or a Hungarian freemason living in Argentina as Alejandro Nagy Varga, using his middle name and his mother's maiden name, and who even bequeathed his ashes to his fellow freemasons? Or perhaps was he the agent reporting under the aliases of "Sándor Kőműves"[3] and "Franz Kirchenbauer"[4] who constantly affirmed his left-wing commitment to his case officer? Or perhaps he was someone else? Or all of the above? In this book no attempt is made to answer these questions, but rather, to support curious readers in crafting answers of their own.

Nagy did not view history from a detached perspective, nor did he live it from below; he lived it, rather, simply as it unfolded around him. It is our hope that the reader will not only gain relevant information on his life and the historical backdrop against which it transpired, but also observe how history was altered, even incrementally, by his actions.

We are helped considerably by the fact that Nagy began regularly documenting his experiences in the late 1920s. Thankfully, he was a gifted and skilled writer, making his diaries,[5] notes, correspondence,[6] and other writings precious sources, not only of his own life, but also that of the twentieth century Hungarian world, and its ecclesiastical history. His personal archive, meticulously preserved and spanning several decades, was purchased during his lifetime by the National Széchényi Library. The collection grew and shrank as Nagy travelled between Budapest, Rome, and South America, with its final home being the Manuscript Collection of the National Széchényi Library in Budapest. These documents, more than any other, serve

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3 State security often assigned their agents or sources telling or clever cover names. In this case "Sándor Kőműves" means "Sándor Mason" (with Sándor the Hungarian version of Alexander) and was likely an allusion to Nagy's freemason identity.

4 Similarly, Nagy's other cover name, "Kirchenbauer," means "church builder" in German.

5 A selection of his diaries, edited by András Keresztes was published in 2019 (Töhötöm Nagy, *Napló*). In addition, the Hungarian Electronic Library has made fragments of Nagy's early diaries available (covering 1937–1940), also edited by András Keresztes. As these were not available to the author at the time of the original publication, in the following chapters, the primary sources are referenced as opposed to these publications. Most of Nagy's reports to the Holy See were selected in a source edition volume in 2020 (cf. Ickx, Keresztes and Somorjai, *Ütközni*).

6 Cf. Keresztes, *Kerkai Jenő*. Similar to the situation with Nagy's diaries, all successive notes reference primary sources as opposed to those published in 2019 by Keresztes.

as this biography's superstructure. Even though personal documents (diaries, notes, correspondence, etc.) are the most prevalent materials found in the Széchényi Library's collection, these are complemented by identification papers, official documents, KALOT material, church and masonic documentation, and manuscripts of his various works. Töhötöm Nagy used this collection when writing *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek* (Jesuits and freemasons).

Despite the wealth of available materials, there are numerous discrepancies between the sources found in Nagy's personal archive, his published works and unpublished manuscripts. On multiple occasions, Nagy demonstrates a tendency to blur the lines between fact and fiction, to say nothing of the various legends and myths surrounding his past! As a rule, while reconstructing certain events from Nagy's life, it is necessary to look beyond his narrative, and instead rely on more balanced primary sources that are chronologically approximate to the event. After all, even a contemporary diary entry is, by its very nature a construct.[7] Accordingly, we sought to compare documents and recollections with a control source in each case, as well as using contemporary historical literature to verify particular periods, places, and topics throughout the process of interpreting sources. Footnotes and this book's source and reference lists offer some indications of the lengths the author went to in pursuit of diligence vis-à-vis source criticism and philology.

In addition to Nagy's personal collection, we have used documents of the Society of Jesus available in copy from the Archives of the Hungarian and the Argentine-Uruguayan Provinces of the Jesuits (Budapest and Buenos Aires). Sources in the Historical Archive of the Secretariat of State, Section for Relations with States and International Organizations (Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati – ASRS) in Vatican City and the Historical Archive of the Pontifical Gregorian University (Archivio Storico della Pontificia Università Gregoriana – APUG) in Rome preserved precious related documentations. The Primate's Archives of Esztergom offer further materials relevant to Nagy's life. The National Archives of Hungary and its Nógrád County branch office contain precious collections regarding Nagy's activity and personal life. Archives, such as those in the United States (National Archives and Records Administra-

7 On interpreting autobiographies see Z. Varga, *Önéletírás*.

tion), Prague (ABS) and Bucharest (A.C.N.S.A.S.) provide a wealth of material pertaining to Nagy's work with American, Czechoslovak, and Romanian intelligence and state security services. An extensive array of sources pertaining to and reflecting Nagy's work can also be found at the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (ÁBTL), but require careful use owing to their sensitive nature.

Our intention is to offer a historical biography that coherently frames Nagy's various experiences, fully taking into account his life's fragmentary and disjointed nature, his many masks, and the extreme differences of the worlds he inhabited. This coherence is achieved not by proceeding from the hypothesis of a static permanence of personality or, in contrast, by positing that this personality evolved over time, but, paradoxically, from the permanence of change. In this fashion, Nagy morphs into a typical representative of an era, the "short twentieth century," embodying the relationship between the individual and history.[8]

To some readers, it might occur that Nagy's life, in more ways than one, bears several similarities to that of Ignác Martinovics.[9] Apart from their powerful intellects, ambition, and mastery of the art of self-representation, both also possessed a seismographic awareness of and familiarity with social and intellectual movements during a period of social upheaval—the twentieth and the eighteenth centuries, respectively—along with a church career, later abandoned, a fascination with Freemasonry, and secret service connections. There is also some similarity in how the two of them left this world. Even though Nagy was not executed at Vérmező (at Buda) as was Martinovics, he wrote of his situation as if, in some way, he had been. Like Martinovics, Nagy's legacy is ambivalent, with the only thing those familiar with it able to agree on being the multitude of different opinions concerning it.[10] In his biography of Martinovics, Vilmos Fraknói writes: "I know the duty of the historian 'not to tell falsehoods,

8 A book of studies has been published recently on the methodological issues of the historical biography. Cf. Vonyó, *Személyiség és történelem*.

9 Ignác Martinovics (1755–1795) was a Hungarian Franciscan, writer, philosopher, secret agent, freemason and one of the leaders of the Hungarian Jacobin movement. He was executed in 1795 for plotting a revolution against the Habsburg Empire.

10 The figure and historical role of Ignác Martinovics has been the subject of considerable controversy in Hungarian historical literature and historical-political thought since his beheading. Presented in detail in Romsics, "Martinovics."

not to fear telling the truth', but I do not acknowledge his right to deviate from the truth on the inspiration of 'caritas'."[11]

This biographer of Töhötöm Nagy has also adhered to this principle, doing its utmost to allow everyone to form an independent opinion. We are convinced that, in this way—namely, through the telling of his story—it becomes possible to understand something more of Nagy's personality and motivations. Although the reader—if he or she pays attention to this sort of thing—can learn a great deal from our book about the psychological aspects of Nagy, this biography is not a psychobiography. After all, history was what Nagy lived and breathed, being not only as determined by it, but also as a determiner of it. This, more than anything else, has guided us in preparing a historical biography of his life.

Writing Nagy's biography has been a challenging task for the author. So even if including acknowledgements of gratitude in a foreword is a happy duty, it should not be considered a mere formality in this case. Without the aid and support of my family, friends, and colleagues, this book would not have seen the light of day, or, perhaps less pessimistically, would not have been of the same quality as that which you now hold. I have truly experienced that "[n]o man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main..."[12] Therefore I would like to thank the following colleagues, friends, and people interested in or devoted to the life of Töhötöm Nagy: Frigyes Back, Margit Balogh, István Bandi, Gábor Bánkuti, Duncan Bare, György Gyarmati, Judith Kesserű Némethy, Róbert Kis-Kapin, Zoltán Koronkai SJ, József Mészáros, Vladimír Petrilak, Attila Pók, Krisztina Slachta, Viktor Attila Soós, Ferenc Szabó SJ, Róbert Szabó, Nóra Szekér, Gábor Tabajdi, Krisztina Tóth, and László Vári.

I wish to acknowledge the loving support of my husband and our three children, which was a real source of energy for me. I am constantly grateful for your love, Julcsi, Marci, Misi, and Marcell Mártonffy.

I would like to also acknowledge the support of my publisher and of everyone who believed it was worthwhile to give this work a chance, and I would like to thank the daughter of Töhötöm Nagy for the times when she made herself available.

11 Fraknói, *Martinovics élete,* 6.
12 John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. Meditation 17.

I.

"Mother, Dreams Don't Lie..."[1]

"I was born for bigger things! The glowing, ideal, real life. [...] Now if I have to give motives for an act of mine, let my first motive be: 'ad astra!'"[2]

1.

In 1946, Nagy had a series of photographs taken of himself, which he called *Álarcok mögött* (Behind masks). In the photos he sports a series of disguises he wore during and after World War II, such as "a driver at the Csonka Machine Factory," "Transylvanian high school teacher," "Finnish university professor," "Jewish merchant returning home after deportation," "ship's fireman on the Black Sea," and "Vatican diplomat." Compellingly, the last picture in the series shows Nagy "decent and normal"—disguise-free—as a Jesuit.[3] The series reflects his personality, revealing his predilection for adventure and risk-taking, his adaptability and willingness to act, his ambition, intelligence, and eccentricity, along with just a tinge of egocentrism. All these traits must be borne in mind when examining Nagy's later life, since, despite its various twists and often hard-to-follow internal and external events, they seem to be its only consistencies. One colleague in the Catholic corporative movement would write of Nagy that:

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1 The excerpt, from Sándor Petőfi's poem *Jövendölés* [Prophecy] is quoted in Nagy's diary when describing his mother's prophetic dream. Manuscript Collection of the National Széchényi Library, (henceforth OSZK Kt.) f. 216/1.

2 *Motívumok* [Motives]. Szeged, January 6, 1929. Here, Nagy lists 107 reasons for joining the Jesuit Order, with this among them. OSZK Kt., f. 216/7. (Sic itur) ad astra = "(Thus one journeys) to the stars!" (Virgil: *Aeneid*)

3 *Álarcok mögött* [Behind masks]. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

"His fate is an incomprehensible and scary labyrinth to me."[4] In all likelihood, this view was shared by many.

Töhötöm Nagy's life began simply enough. He was born on June 23, 1908 in Bozitópuszta,[5] a part of Magyarcsernye, Torontál county, into a Transylvanian family from Székelyudvarhely (now Odorheiu Secuiesc in Romania). His father, Vilmos Nagy (1871–1932), was an employee of the Hungarian State Railways,[6] which meant the family needed to move several times during Töhötöm's childhood. His mother, Margit Varga died early in his life, with Erzsébet, his half-sister, being born of his father's second marriage.[7]

Töhötöm spent his childhood in Piski, Hunyad County, entering the Gyulafehérvár Roman Catholic Secondary School in 1918. He completed his first year there with "satisfactory" results.[8] According to the school bulletin, he left on October 14, 1919, shortly after the beginning of the schoolyear, due to "his parents leaving Transylvania," a fate which befell many Transylvanian Hungarian families seeking a new life within Hungary's new borders in the aftermath of World War I.[9] Töhötöm's studies would continue in Kisújszállás,[10] their new home, at the Calvinist secondary school. Here too, his progress was rated "satisfactory," roughly corresponding to a C in the American educational system.[11] He completed his

4 Takáts, *"Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."*

5 Bozitópuszta is now a Serbian village called Aleksandrovo, in the Banat region of Vojvodina.

6 He is mentioned as a railway conductor in the 1909 almanac of Hunyad County. Cf. Dénes, *Hunyadvármegyei almanach,* 48. Vilmos Nagy chief conductor 1918–1920. Based on records of the Gyulafehérvár Roman Catholic Secondary School. On the State Service questionnaire concerning Töhötöm Nagy, his father's occupation is stated as having been "railway chief officer." Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (henceforth ÁBTL) 3.2.1. 1584/1. 30.

7 *Questionnaire.* Budapest, September 15, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. 1584/1. 30–31.

8 Kárpiss, *Az Erdélyi*, 13.

9 *Registration form for 1919/1920 schoolyear.* Gyulafehérvár Roman Catholic Secondary School.

10 The Nagy family lived at 27 Kossuth Street, in Kisújszállás. OSZK Kt., f. 216/145.

11 At this time, "satisfactory" was better than "sufficient" and "insufficient"; but worse than "good" and "excellent." Thus, on the continental scale (from 1–5), he would have received a '3.' Ignoring the exceptional events of his life, Nagy astutely cast his own image and was deft at brand building. As such, we can hardly be surprised that he is remembered as having been an "outstanding student" and an "exceptional athlete, who was once national junior champion in artistic gymnastics." Takáts, *"Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."* The data available does not entirely support these statements. Nagy is not listed among the students who received a *matura* graded "good" or "excellent" in the academic results section of Kisújszállás Calvinist Secondary School bulletins. When his name is mentioned, it is

matura (roughly equivalent to high school graduation) in 1926 and applied to study history and geography at the Péter Pázmány Royal Hungarian University's Faculty of Humanities,[12] before opting instead to join the Society of Jesus later that year.

Although he remained close to his family, his entrance into the Jesuit Order fundamentally altered the dynamic of their relationship. The telegram which he sent to his parents informing them of his decision read: "Leaving on Friday forever. Please come at once."[13] In his diary, he noted that

> They rushed to Budapest desperately to say goodbye.—They arrived at 10 AM, coming to the institute for the deaf and dumb, where I taught while studying at university. There was great crying and begging. I just laughed it off. I gave my clothes away. [...] My train was due to leave at 1 PM. They accompanied me to the station, begging all along that I would see some sense, not act the fool, and not become a Jesuit. And the train left. A huge feeling of liberation washed over me...[14]

From the available data, it would appear that this decision was made with all the fervor of a vocational awakening, and with every intention of a life-long commitment, a mere two months after the young man had relocated to Budapest. He departed the capital for the novitiate at Érd, a small town not far away, where Imre Mócsy, already a novice and later to become one of his closest confederates, met him at the station—along with others—on November 12, 1926.[15]

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as one of the "satisfactory" students. He was in fact successful at a gymnastics championship in his 8th year of schooling, however, this amounted to a silver medal won at a local competition for his performances on the parallel and horizontal bars. *Bulletin of the Kisújszállás Calvinist High School (Secondary School until 1922/23) 1920/21, 1921/22, 1922/23, 1923/24, 1924/25, 1925/26.*

12 Takáts, *"Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."*

13 *Telegram,* Budapest, November 10, 1926. OSZK Kt., f. 216/1.

14 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged], November 12, 1939. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13. His decision was not altered by his father's mentioning Töhötöm's boyhood love interest, Lujza Straub, whom he referred to as his fiancée in his book *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek* [Jesuits and freemasons].

15 "Since there was nobody to pick me up, I asked to go on the back of a cart. But after a few meters, Béla Német and Imre Mócsy appeared." *Diary excerpt* [Szeged], November 12, 1939. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13. and "Today marks the 20th anniversary of my joining the Society [of Jesus]. I went to Father Mócsy's to celebrate this fine day." *Diary excerpt,* Rome, November 12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

Béla Bangha,[16] the first Jesuit Nagy had met in his life, exerted an indirect influence on his choice. Bangha held lectures in Kisújszállás while Töhötöm was in his fifth year of high school, one of which, according to Nagy's diary, had deeply moved him. At the end of the event, Nagy was introduced to Bangha by his divinity teacher, who, as he found out later, remarked to Bangha that he could become a fine Jesuit. Bangha turned to the 15-year-old boy possessed of a good psychological sense:

> [t]he next day we traveled together to Budapest, because I was to visit Bishop Majláth.[17] We became such good friends on the train, that we went on foot from Nyugati railway station to the KSV's[18] printing house and rushed through the halls. Father Bangha introduced me as "a young man eager to learn," who wants to see a real printing house. This was where I saw a typesetting machine for the first time in my life. Then we took a fiacre to [Saint Stephen's] Basilica, and I continued on foot to [Széchenyi] Chain Bridge... [...] This was my first meeting with Father Bangha. It left a deep impression on me. [...] Father Bangha also played a crucial role in my joining the order. My calling was strange and almost miraculous. I decided suddenly one evening that I was to be a priest. It was becoming a priest then, nothing more. Secular or monastic, and which order of the many, I didn't know. I just wanted

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Imre Mócsy SJ (1907–1980) was a Jesuit, and holder of doctoral degree in theology from the University of Innsbruck, and later, at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he taught in the Department of New Testament Studies from 1944 on. Several years later, in 1947, he returned to Hungary. He was subsequently imprisoned from 1949–1954 and again from 1965–1968. In between these periods, and after his second release from jail, he worked as a manual laborer for the Hungarian State Railways, before retiring in 1970. See his autobiography: Mócsy, *Hagytam magam szerettetni*. On the chronology of his Jesuit life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 155.
Béla Német SJ (1907–1971) was a Jesuit and moral theologian. He lived in Klagenfurt from 1959 until his death. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 164–65.

16 Béla Bangha SJ (1880–1940) was a Jesuit, theologian, orator, editor, and Catholic press innovator. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 25. For more on his life, see Nyisztor, *Bangha Béla*, and more recently Molnár and Szabó, *Bangha Béla SJ*, and Klestenitz, *Pajzs és kard*.

17 Gusztáv Majláth (1864–1940) was a Transylvanian bishop.

18 KSV = Központi Sajtóvállalat (Central Press Company), founded by Béla Bangha in 1918. An umbrella organization encompassing cultural, scientific, and political Catholic media outlets between the two world wars. Tibor Klestenitz has written multiple articles on its history, see e.g. Klestenitz, "Bangha Béla," Klestenitz, "A Központi Sajtóvállalat," and Klestenitz, "Katolikus sajtó."

> to celebrate masses and hear confessions… The next day, when I began to implement the previous night's decisive with resolve, I stopped bewildered for a moment early in the morning: Where exactly should I go? My first thought was to join the Archdiocese of Eger, but that was just a fleeting possibility. Soon, I clearly decided for the monastic lifestyle, and began to seriously consider the Dominican Order […] As I was thinking for a few moments of becoming a Dominican, it dawned on me: What about Father Bangha? I want to be just like him! I want to be Father Bangha the Second! […] I was amazingly conceited, and I had an almost sickly ambition. What I saw in Jesuitism—apart from an elevated concept of priesthood—was to be a great man, like Father Bangha![19]

Nagy saw the Society of Jesus as offering him a way to realize his call for greatness, a desire he had possessed since childhood. When he joined the order, he completely abandoned his old life, even destroying his diary. Thankfully, this destruction was not thorough, as he retained some fragments, which he referred to as his "thrown-away diary." This includes those passages in which he describes his mother's dream, and his feelings about it.[20] The prophetic dream was deeply ingrained in the young boy's psyche, and his choice of destiny fundamentally determined by it.

> My mother said to us one morning that she had had a very interesting dream. From then on, this dream was to play a crucial role in my secular life, and motivate me to aim high, since I half believed in it. The dream went as follows: the entire family was on its way to a large house. Many people lived there, and they did various odd jobs, like cobbling, but their main duty was to guard a strange well. This gigantic windlass well stood in the yard and was extremely deep. It dated back to the Árpád dynasty [9th and 10th century AD], even the Hungarian conquest [895 AD], and its wheel was so huge, that it could only have been spun by one of the conquering chieftains, but none had been born since to even make it budge. […] We approached this well, and I said I could spin

19 *Diary excerpt* [Florence], March 28, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

20 It is obvious from the description, that although he says "mother," his foster mother, Erzsébet Kiss (1891–1968) is meant.

Töhötöm Nagy in 1926

it. My mother asked me not to do it, first because it was exceedingly heavy, and second because I might get into trouble. The guardians of the well looked out of the window, and cocked their heads, what was I up to? Then I grabbed the wheel and started spinning it with incredible force. My family and the guardians stared in awe, for it had been a millennium since anyone did this. But all of a sudden, the wheel gave and pulled me into the well and I fell. My mother ran to the spot, trying to see me, all the while shouting my name, but there was only a distant moan and my cries for help. There, I died.[21]

Immediately after describing the dream, Nagy went on to recall his reaction at the time:

[w]hen my mother told me this, I gave it a lot of thought. They looked at me with a certain holy respect, and I could feel it from the way they talked, that great things were expected of me. I would often say from then on: "Mother, dreams don't lie." I walked the dusty roads of Kisújszállás like a prince. I started to detest people. "I!" This magical concept appeared to me more and more vividly. I was becoming self-aware completely and irrevocably. [...] I wanted to be Napoleon. I was thinking of future battles, I even thought of myself as a superior being. It had little basis, but it was not completely lacking the truth.[22]

21 *Excerpt from the "thrown-away diary."* Szeged, 1929. OSZK Kt., f. 216/1, 56–59.
22 *Excerpt from the "thrown-away diary."* Szeged, 1929. OSZK Kt., f. 216/1, 56–59.

Stimulated by the opportunity to begin what he saw as his extraordinary life, he decided at 18 to follow in the footsteps of Saint Ignatius and become a soldier of Christ.

2.

The Society of Jesus had been founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). This modern order was approved by Pope Paul III in his papal bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae (To the Government of the Church Militant),* issued in 1540, wherein he recognized the new order, specifying its mission as spreading the faith through preaching, charity, youth education, and spiritual exercises.[23] Subsequent to the recognition, Saint Ignatius and his followers, by way of the Order's Constitution, developed the organizational framework that defines the Society of Jesus to this day. In order to boost their efficiency, Saint Ignatius created a centralized government within the order, and defined various degrees of membership in the Society. As such, a final commitment was and remains possible only after a prolonged period of preparation. In ecclesiastical terms, the Society of Jesus is exempt, placing it not under the jurisdiction of the local bishop but, rather, as directly answerable to the Pope. The supreme body of religious administration is known as the General Congregation of the Order—the *Congregatio generalis*—which is responsible for electing the Superior General. He is the supreme leader of the Society of Jesus, appoints its provincial superiors and local administrators—assistants and provincials—and decides on admissions and dismissals.

There are four levels of membership in the Society of Jesus: (1) Novices; (2.) Scholastic, or studying members; (3.) Perpetual helpers/*coauditores spirituales*, among whom are priests (Fathers), and assisting laypeople (Brothers); (4.) and *Professi* who have taken the final, fourth vow. Novices take a simple perpetual vow after a two-year trial period called the Novitiate, after which they become scholastics. Their studies in humanities are followed by several years of practical training (*magisterium*), which is capped by a theological education. During or after this, they are ordained into the priesthood, after which they perform pastoral, social, or educational duties, referred to as apostolic tasks. The final year, involving a third trial

23 Bangert, *A jezsuiták*, 27.

period of spiritual training, the tertianship, then follows. Once complete, the profession and the fourth solemn, and final, vow are made. In total, studies can take anywhere from 12–15 years, measured from the date of entrance into the order. Since the Society was conceptualized primarily as a missionary order, the Final Vow states that *professi* will go wherever the Pope sends them.[24]

After attempts in the sixteenth century to establish themselves in Hungary, the Jesuits expanded from Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia) College, founded in 1615 by Péter Pázmány. The order evolved continuously and played a crucial role in the reformation of Hungarian Catholicism as well as the Counter-reformation, and in a broad sense, the history of Hungarian culture.[25] Although Pope Clement XIV suppressed the order in 1773 in his *breve*[26] *Dominus ac Redemptor* "for the peace and tranquility of the Church" owing to the role the Society of Jesus had played in diplomacy and politics, thus temporarily interrupting its evolution. It was rehabilitated in 1814 and its activities in Hungary resumed in 1853.

A major development came with the secession of an independent Hungarian province from the common Austro-Hungarian province in 1909. This represented the culmination of a long process, as the need for an independent Hungarian branch had been discussed several times both during the prosperous periods of the Habsburg Empire, and, more concretely, following the order's restoration in the nineteenth century.[27] Hungarian Jesuits underwent training at Nagyszombat until 1920, when, following the Treaty of Trianon, these facilities were transferred to Szeged, Érd, and Budapest. The college of humanities relocated from Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia) to Innsbruck, Austria in 1910. There, theologians belonging to the Hungarian Province could continue their studies at the Jesuit Petrus Canisius College, which became Collegium Maximum, possessing Faculties of Philosophy and Theology.[28] Apart from their training facilities, the Hungarian Society of Jesus possessed an impres-

24 Bangert, *A jezsuiták*, 42, and O'Malley, *The Jesuits*, 17–30.
25 Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 23–28.
26 O'Malley, *The Jesuits*, 104–106. A *breve* or papal brief (*litterae apostolicae in forma brevis*) is a "simple" apostolic document (in contrast to a *bull*), sealed with red wax, and issued by the Pope usually to celebrate an anniversary.
27 Petruch, *Száz év*, 359–78, and Fejérdy, *Provincia Hungariae*, 13–22.
28 On the history of the Innsbruck Jesuit college see Coreth, *Das Jesuitenkolleg Innsbruck*.

sive infrastructure that included high schools and boarding schools in Kalocsa[29] and Pécs,[30] and convents in Budapest, Hódmezővásárhely, Kaposvár, Kispest (today part of Budapest), Mezőkövesd, Nagykapornak, and Szeged. The Hungarian province also operated missionary posts in Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca, Romania), and Daming, China.[31] In particular, the Jesuit Order flourished during the interwar period, with its development reflected in the community's growth from 182 (1910) to 406 (1949) members.[32] This boom ran parallel to the so-called Catholic renaissance, which saw a revival of religious life in Hungary from the 1890s.[33]

The encyclical *Rerum novarum,* issued in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII, changed the Catholic church's history. From then on, through renewed social teaching, the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church expounded its ideas on economic and social problems arising during the modern age, as well as the interests of faith. With this, Pope Leo XIII fomented a revival of Catholicism at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His advocacy of increased Catholic involvement in ideologically-driven social and political organizations, was coupled with a religious renewal that sought to rekindle Catholicism's values in secularized European societies.[34] The experience of World War I provided a new impulse for this renewal of religious life, and, as a result of historical and spiritual influences, an resurgence can be observed in Hungary during the 1920s.

3.

Töhötöm Nagy entered the Society of Jesus during a time of relative prosperity, both for the Hungarian Catholic church and for the Hungarian Jesuit Province, making him a shaper of his era by way of his activities with the latter.

Nagy was a novice in Érd for two years, before studying humanities in Szeged between 1928 and 1931. He took his First Vow on November 13, 1928.[35] Having studied philosophy like many of his fellow Jesuit novices,

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29 Lakatos, "Jezsuita oktatás-nevelés," 75–93, and Bikfalvi, *"Mindent Isten…,"* 53–78.
30 Bánkuti, *A pécsi Pius Kollégium*.
31 Vámos, "A támingi misszió."
32 Pálos, *Viharon*, 12, and Nyisztor, *Ötven esztendő*, 124–27.
33 For more on this see Petrás, *Társadalmi tanítás*.
34 Casanova, *Public Religions*, 11–39; Casanova, "A Public Religions – újragondolva."
35 *Text of my First Jesuit Vow* Szeged, November 13, 1928. OSZK Kt., f. 216/9.

he commenced his magisterial work at the Kalocsa Archiepiscopal High School (hereafter, KAHS). There, from 1931 to 1934, he was dormitory supervisor and a P.E. teacher.[36] The KAHS had been maintained by the Society of Jesus since 1860, and was, by the time of Nagy's arrival, nationally renowned.[37] Among others, Ottokár Prohászka[38] studied there in the early 1870s, fondly referring to his Jesuit teachers in his memoire as "illuminating men."[39] Among his famous teachers were the composer Alajos Hennig (1826–1902), the nephew of Franz Liszt; Kálmán Rosty (1832–1905), a renowned speaker and literature teacher; Mike Tóth (1838–1932), a mineral collector who taught there for 56 school years, and Gyula Fényi (1845–1927), who conducted world-renowned research on the Sun from the school's observatory.[40]

However, Kalocsa was not a career for Nagy, but a site of preparation. We do not know the precise date, however it was most likely during the spring of 1931, when Nagy was visited in his scholasticate [in Szeged] by his fellow Jesuit, Jenő Kerkai.[41] Kerkai was several years ahead of Nagy in his Jesuit training, and on this occasion was bringing KAHS students to Szeged as their chaperone on a field trip. After meeting Nagy, he informed him in his room that he was looking for collaborators on his new projects and had thought of him. Kerkai informed Nagy that he should expect another 9–10 years of training, but—if he felt like it—he could work with Kerkai on this new project in the interim. Nagy remembers Kerkai's argument:

36 The daily political newspaper *Pesti Napló* [Budapest journal] reported his transfer in the description of Jesuit dispositions. *Pesti Napló*, August 4, 1931, 11. He lived in the Stephaneum building of the KAHS, as seen in the *Magyar Kultúra*'s [Hungarian culture] "Our Authors" address section, a journal he submitted articles to. *Magyar Kultúra* (20) 1933/23.

37 Lakatos, "Jezsuita oktatás-nevelés," 88.

38 Ottokár Prohászka (1858–1927) was an influential Hungarian Roman Catholic theologian, writer and rhetor, later Bishop of Székesfehérvár.

39 Here, Antal Petruch quotes from Prohászka's diary: Petruch, *Száz év*, 192.

40 There is even a crater on the Moon named after Gyula Fényi.

41 Jenő Kerkai SJ (1904–1970), was a Jesuit, best known as the founder, principal organizer, and national president of KALOT, which was formed in 1935. Arrested in 1949, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, which he completed after a brief respite in 1956/57. When released in 1959, he worked as a manual laborer at MAHART, the Hungarian Shipping Company in Dunaharaszti. He would later become a curate at the ecclesiastical social home in Püspökszentlászló. From 1964 until his death, he lived in Pannonhalma, at the Benedictine Abbey priest pensioners' home. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 113. For more on his life see, among others: András, Bálint and Szabó, *Kerkai emlékezete*; Balogh, "A 'Kisatya'" 42–72; Cseszka, "Jezsuita életút," 683–92; on his role in KALOT: Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*; on his trials: Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 96–98.

> We're living in the century of mass movements. To get the power you need masses and not the select few bleeding hearts or the handful on top. And the road to the masses isn't love, their ears have become coarse with all the betrayal and plunder, they don't expect alms or consolation, but rights. Whoever gives them the right to a better life, that's whose God they will worship. Let us, the Church, give it to them, and they will believe in us again. […] Nowadays, the real apostolic way, the one that doesn't want to patch things up or make pure souls shinier, is the way of social justice and social mass organization. […] We have to be a step or rather a sprint ahead to accomplish "the greater glory of God."[42]

Kerkai went on to say that he wanted to begin socially organizing the peasantry, as opposed to the urban workers, because "no one has cast eyes on them with a large-scale program yet. We're breaking new ground! The promise of success is there…"[43]

Nagy was invited to participate and, if receptive, Kerkai would appeal to the Provincial Superior, a life-changing exchange Nagy later reconstructed: "There, that afternoon, I saw these heavy truths light as day, and they have sunk into my soul for a lifetime." Nagy agreed, and the plan was developed further. "We are going to start a social peasant movement. We are going to work from the bottom up, organizing youth. We will use them on the broadest cultural, economic and spiritual grounds for organizing, that is, we will start with managerial training courses, and as years go by, as the youth grow up, so will the movement. In an almost biological sense, they will mature into a general peasant movement."[44] Kerkai and Nagy agreed that, while in Kalocsa, Nagy would continue social outreach work among the students Kerkai had gathered, since Kerkai was

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42 Töhötöm Nagy, *Korfordulón* [At the turning point of an era], OSZK Kt., f. 216/185, 29–31, and Töhötöm Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 98–99. (Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent quotes are from this edition.) "Greater glory of God" is a reference to the Jesuit motto: *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, "for the greater glory of God." The discussion's accuracy cannot be verified using contemporary sources. In terms of content, the discussion seems to reflect Nagy's views of the time. The idea of social organizing work as an apostolic mission seems to have crystallized following the death of Fr Bangha in 1940. On this, see the relevant parts of the next chapter and his diary: *Diary excerpt* [Florence] May 23, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

43 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 31, and Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 100.

44 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 34, and Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 100–101.

transferring to Innsbruck that autumn to study theology. Following their discussion, Kerkai returned to Kalocsa, and Nagy put aside his other ideas for the future, appealing to the Rector on that very next day for permission to read books on sociology and social policy.

Thus, Nagy arrived at Kalocsa for his *magister* years full of excitement, convinced that his eyes had been opened to a field that stimulated his entire skillset. He read everything from Marx and Engels to Catholic philosophers. Following Kerkai's example, he discussed various models for small-scale action with his students: They organized a small sales co-operative, they published *Regnum*,[45] a student newspaper, and they refined their rhetorical and public speaking skills. [46]

Social issues were popular foci of the intelligentsia throughout the 1930s, and the Jesuit Order, where strong views were formulated, was no exception.[47] The encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* issued by Pope Pius XI in 1931, marking the 40th anniversary of *Rerum novarum* provided the issue with a new impulse by advocating renewed participation of the Catholic Church in solving social issues through a reinterpretation of corporatism.[48]

On the basis of works by Jesuit thinkers—primarily those of Heinrich Pesch, Gustav Gundlach, and Oswald von Nell-Breuning—Pope Pius XI envisioned a model of society in *Quadragesimo anno* where advocacy

45 *Regnum* was first published in 1928. Kerkai, *A kalocsai kollégium*.

46 Nagy, *Korfordulón*, 36, and Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 106. He had already written about social issues in the high school journal: Töhötöm Nagy, "Szociális idők szellemében" [In the spirit of social times]. In *Kalocsai Kollégium. A Kalocsai Jézustársasági Érseki Gimnázium intézetének lapja és kongregációs értesítője* [Kalocsa dormitory. Journal and congregational bulletin of the boarding school of the Kalocsa Jesuit Archiepiscopal High School], Kalocsa, 1–2 February 1932.

47 For example, Fr Elemér Csávossy and Fr László Varga. On the issue, see Hámori, "Jezsuita társadalmi gondolkodók." Töhötöm Nagy later wrote specifically about Csávossy's role and writings. Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 37–42. Elemér Csávossy SJ (1883–1972), was a Jesuit theologian, teacher, and writer. He served as provincial Superior from 1949, was arrested in 1950, freed from the Vác prison in 1956, and lived thereafter in Pannonhalma. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 47. László Varga SJ (1901–1974), was a Jesuit and sociologist. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 239. By the 1930s, a consensus had been reached by a wide swath of Hungary's intellectual elite that the Horthy regime needed reform owing to the extreme political, economic, and social problems the country was facing. Here, it is sufficient to reference the birth of the so-called 'populist movement,' or the then already half-century long struggle of Hungarian social democracy.

48 As J. Chappel argues, "Corporatism was a transnational response to a transnational economic crisis," which influenced also the Catholic thought on economy and society. Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, 126.

through corporatism, rather than on the basis of class, would facilitate the peaceful coexistence of different groups. The end result, he held, would be a more just and equitable society.[49] Thus, in the 1930s papal social teaching drove Catholic sociological reflection (both lay and clerical) on the Church's social presence, which, beyond the Church's traditional charitable activities, took the form of theoretically and practically elaborating on new possibilities.[50]

In the 1934/1935 school year, Nagy was afforded the opportunity, keeping with ecclesiastical trends as well as those of international social and scientific thought, to deepen his theoretical interest in social issues, by beginning theological studies in Innsbruck. Kerkai was still there, and even if primary sources are lacking, we can be fairly confident that they picked up the thread of their last conversation, with Kerkai further elaborating on his plans.

Nagy would complete a single year in Innsbruck, thereafter continuing his theological studies in Szeged.[51] However, his jaunt to Innsbruck saw his and Kerkai's paths cross, at least in terms of physical location and life station, as the latter also returned to Szeged following his ordination. There, as part of his apostolic work, Kerkai founded KALOT, with two lay collaborators, György Farkas[52] and József Ugrin.[53] In a brief period, KALOT would grow to become the most successful corporative movement attempting to tackle social issues in Hungary.[54]

During this time, Nagy's training continued. He had already begun publishing in Kalocsa, with his first writings appearing in *Magyar Kultúra* [Hungarian culture], a Jesuit periodical founded by Béla Bangha in 1913. However, Nagy also wrote an article for *Korunk szava* [The voice of our age],

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49 On the text see Tomka and Goják, *Az egyház társadalmi tanítása,* 57–103.

50 On this see Petrás, *"A Splendid Return."*

51 Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 162.

52 Dr. György Farkas (1908–1991), was a lawyer, managing secretary of the KALOT between 1935 and 1939, principal of the KALOT's people's college in Érd between 1942 and 1946, member of the (Christian) Democratic People's Party from 1945, and later member of Parliament.

53 József Ugrin (1910–1993), was one of KALOT's main organizers, and a member of Parliament for the (Christian) Democratic People's Party in 1947.

54 KALOT changed from a "Secretariat" to an "Association" following the amendment of its statutes in 1938, having gained independence and become national in scope. On KALOT's history see M. Balogh, *Egy jezsuita apostoli küldetés*, 94–125. and M. Balogh, *A KALOT*. On corporative movements see also: J. Gergely, "Katolikus hivatásrendi mozgalmak," 3–42.

a reformist Catholic periodical started in 1931.[55] First, he wrote feuilletons until one of the editors at *Magyar Kultúra*, Zoltán Nyisztor,[56] commissioned him to write reviews. These evolved into lengthier articles, very similar to studies, on social topics framed in the popular sociological manner of the 1930s, as well as on issues concerning the Church's social presence.[57]

Nagy's social sensitivity was intensified not only by his growing academic and political interests, but also by news about the his own family's deteriorating financial situation: "[s]ometimes my development in this direction was given a push by family trouble, impoverishment, misery!"—he recorded in his diary.[58] After his father's death, in response to the difficulties his family was facing, he wrote desperately: "Their cruel situation is unspeakably painful. I just cannot cope with it. [...] Crazier and crazier plans were rattling around in my head every day. Then it occurred to me that I should leave everything today. Everything! And sell myself in a single set of clothes to the Communists."[59]

In reading the above, it becomes apparent that, during his formative years as a Jesuit, Nagy's personality was shaped by multiple impulses, all of which pointed in what was more or less the same direction. The interrelationship between his studies, his reflections, and his experiences collated into a unified, coherent world view, supported by spiritual exercises, individual spiritual guidance, and the comradery of the Jesuit brotherhood.

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55 Töhötöm Nagy, "Magára hagyott tanyavilágunk" [Our abandoned farmlands]. *Korunk Szava* (1932/4): 7–8.

56 Zoltán Nyisztor (1893–1979) was a journalist and Catholic priest, best known as a defining personality of Hungarian public life during the interwar period. He also served for nearly 15 years as the editor of *Magyar Kultúra*.

57 E.g., "Az élő szemét" [The living garbage], *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/3): 140–42; "A sátán bibliája" ["Satan's Bible"], *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/6): 275–76; "Review of Sándor Schmidt: Családvédelem és gyermekvédelem" [Protecting families, protecting children], *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/7): 326–27; "Akár a vadvizek" [Just like wild rivers], *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/10): 461–62; "Krisztust...kenyeret!" ["Christ...Bread!"] *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/12): 573–75; "Háborús pápák és béke-pápák" [War popes and peace popes], *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/13–14): 51–54; "A nyomor mint keresethalmozás" [Misery as an accumulation of earnings], *Magyar Kultúra* (1932/15–16): 153–55; "Mezőgazdaságunk válsága" [The crisis of our agriculture], *Magyar Kultúra* (1933/2): 66–71; "Szociális problémák a diákok között" [Social issues among students], *Magyar Kultúra* (1933/9): 398–402; "A szovjet, mint szövetséges" [The Soviet as an ally], *Magyar Kultúra* (1933/23): 479–80; "Feltámadt misztériumdrámák" [Mystery-plays resurrected], *Magyar Kultúra* (1935/3): 317–19; "A Szovjet újabb kudarca" [Another failure of the Soviet], *Magyar Kultúra* (1935/2): 261–64.

58 *Excerpt from the "Thrown-away diary,"* Szeged, 1929. OSZK Kt., f. 216/1, 59.

59 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] May 11, 1937. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

Upon his return to Szeged from Innsbruck, the next turning point in Nagy's Jesuit life—his ordination—approached. Throughout his various assignments, he had consistently met the mark, performing his duties without difficulty, to such an extent that his superiors harbored no serious doubts as to his suitability and the authenticity of his vocation. However, as a rite of passage, ordination, approached, his inner doubts began to grow. These stemmed not from the lack of faith, but rather, from self-doubt. In his extant diary excerpts, he recorded the ebbs and flows of his spiritual life. sometimes he was wont to rationalize his problems with intellectual rigor, while on other occasions he would, in impulsive bursts, stylize himself as an "impudent intruder," still searching for his place in God's plans:

> [s]ometimes I'm not even knocking on Heaven's door, I'm banging. I'm tugging at the handle. Like our Lord Jesus had said, the violent shall seize Heaven. We can twist the meaning of these words however we like, let the exegetes come, they still mean that after a thousand self-denials we have to elbow our way to the gates and knock and make noise until God opens up for us and fills our pockets with grace. I didn't invent this incessant knocking, the Lord Jesus explained it to us in not one, but two parables so that we should understand it well. I believe in the Gospel and I know it wasn't written so that in the end we wouldn't live in the way it prescribes. We do a lot of posing before the Lord Jesus, but he wants us to be natural and honest. And what is more honest than becoming positively impudent intruders in our hunger for grace? This is the theory of banging on the door.[60]

Still, he felt isolated on multiple occasions:

> [A]gain, the feeling of spiritual emptiness has appeared to me several times. I don't live as grace-consciously as being a son of God would require. This empty life is horrible! […] I feel like a sapling that was uprooted from the forest, and planted far, far away. I'm standing here

60 *Első találkozások Istennel* [First meetings with God], Letter 6; *Az arcátlan tolakodó* [The impudent intruder], OSZK Kt., f. 216/16, 32.

> alone, without an heir, without roots really. [...] Sometimes I run around on the terrace or in the yard as if in a cage, I want to scream in pain: I am so depressed by confinement, that small spot of blue sky.[61]

At this point, Nagy was so overcome by malaise that he would remark years, even decades later that before his ordination, that he had seriously considered leaving the order.[62] Ultimately, he did not; however, he often went through periods of trials and tribulations while continuing preparations to become a priest.

As his enthusiasm displaced doubt and fear, however, Nagy realized that he was not as alone as he had thought: many were concerned about him and his well-being. He recorded a discussion with his Provincial Superior in his diary which took place when Fr Jenő Somogyi[63] presented him with his characterizations and opinions just prior to his ordination. Nagy was confronted with several critical comments, some of which leveled rather strong accusations against his personality traits. He saw these as fair, and offering a road to further development: "he is wont to immediately tie himself,[64] but it's apparent that he overcomes himself; he has big ambitions; he likes to brag; he can be cruel and rude; he is very impulsive, but he at once strongly restrains himself."[65] At the end of their conversation, Fr Somogyi revealed a new perspective to him as if it were a natural fact: "regarding the far future, he confirmed what he had said earlier: I was expected to go to Budapest, since—as he said—I write easily and speak well. But this time he added: my organizational skills will first be put to a test. I believe he referred to me taking over leadership of the youth organizations from Fr Kerkai, while he completed his probation. This would be the test."[66]

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61 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] January 13 and 22; February 8, 1937, OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

62 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Erzsébet Nagy, Mrs Lajos Bihary.* Buenos Aires, 7 July 1948. Nógrád County Archive, National Archives of Hungary (henceforth MNL NL) XIII. 30. *Documents of the Bihary family.*

63 Jenő Somogyi SJ (1879–1954), was a Jesuit, and Provincial Superior between 1935 and 1942. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 210–211.

64 = be stubborn

65 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] April 13, 1937. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

66 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] April 13, 1937.

Nagy only came to understand the matter's significance later on, but for the time being, he felt reassured about the path that had been lain before him.

> I talked with Fr Kerkai today. He said Fr Provincial promised him my involvement in the movement right after I'd completed theology. It's incredibly beneficial to me. Almost inconceivably beneficial. I am to drop into an excellently prepared job: I just have to continue it. Senior position at once: national secretary-general, diocesan director. I can get to know the people, pick up dialectal terms from the peasants. I can get familiar with the national leadership. I can gain prestige. I can acquire experience in social, economic issues, I can practice organizing. Anyway, and by any human standard, the best possible start! […] I feel immensely active, a swift initiative! I have bold impulse in me, I can make people work. Then again, if I can manage, I'm already in, and I'm on my way.[67]

When, on June 24, 1937, 400 years to the day after the ordination of Saint Ignatius and his colleagues, Töhötöm Nagy was ordained along with others, according to his enthusiastic diary entries, the young Jesuit priest basked in God's grace.[68] And, although he had years of training ahead of him, he was ready to make his mark in the world.

67 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] April 17, 1937.

68 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] June, July 1937. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13. Also ordained were István Cser-Palkovits, Lajos Máriás (Gologi), Tibor Palánkay (Gausz), Mihály Legeza, László Palotay (Pájer), and József Szabó.

II.

Töhötöm Nagy and KALOT

> *"This agrarian youth organization [...] started from an almost nondescript beginning, with meager resources, with just the magic and the flame of the idea. [...] Its inception and its success must surely be counted as a miracle. Before the country could sit up and take notice, it had begun and grown. It grew out of its first breeches by the week, and new ones had to be tailored. Its spread was so rapid, that one could barely keep up with and note its stages. Only those who have seen the first groups of peasant boys, under the flying flags and emblems, as they started to march and multiply [...] only they can know what KALOT meant."*[1]

1.

In the summer of 1938, as Töhötöm Nagy was assigned by the Jesuit Order to replace Jenő Kerkai, who was on his third probation in Budapest at the Jesuit house of spiritual exercises in Zugliget, KALOT had already exploded onto the Catholic movement scene.[2] From autumn 1935, Kerkai's colleagues György Farkas and József Ugrin had crafted a network stretching from Szeged to the neighboring villages and farms, which was to be the base of local organizations and associations, until the movement developed further. Peasant youths invited to the leadership training sessions in Szeged were thoroughly trained and familiarized with KALOT's

1 Nyisztor, *Ötven esztendő*, 195.

2 On the transformation from "Secretariat" to "Association" see András, "Kerkai Jenő és a KALOT," 622.

work and goals, enabling them to start organizing local KALOT groups in their own communities.[3]

KALOT's *Vezérkönyv* (Leader's guide) summarizes these goals in four brief, easy to understand slogans: "More Christ-like people! More educated villages! A people with greater vitality! Self-respecting Hungarians!"[4] These slogans embodied the Catholic and social aims of the movement, as well as its ideas of how the nation should be. Through them, KALOT offered its members a program that, by a complex interpretation of the agrarian issue, would increase their knowledge and expand their horizon, raise awareness, develop their values and skills, and recognize the power of individual aspirations and collective action. In brief, KALOT would support agrarian youth, the most active members of the peasantry, who for generations had suffered the structural problems presented by poverty and economic insecurity. Often, these proved to be insurmountable handicaps. Thanks to the relevance of its objectives and its networked approach to organization, the movement enjoyed rapid development: According to some newspaper reports, the parade at the 1938 International Eucharistic Congress was attended by 20,000–25,000 KALOT members, and these only represented those who had traveled to Budapest.[5] In the same year that Nagy took over ecclesiastic leadership of KALOT, according to its

3 Balogh, *A KALOT*, 33–39.

4 Farkas, *Vezérkönyv*, and *Alapszabály-tervezet* [Draft statutes], September 2, 1937. OSZK Kt., f. 216/61.

5 Estimates as to the actual number vary: Ugrin quoted 10,000, Töhötöm Nagy, 15,000, KALOT's journal, *Dolgozó Fiatalság* [Working youth], 20,000, and other newspapers reported 25,000. Cf. *Nem felejtünk! Egy életre szóló emlék lesz az 1500 faluból összesereglett 20000-nyi legény díszgyűlése!* [We shall not forget! The assembly of 20,000 youths from 1,500 villages will be an everlasting memory!] *Dolgozó Fiatalság* (1938/6): 1–3; Live an honest life for God and the Hungarian homeland! 25,000 young Hungarian workers at the parade of the Catholic agrarian youth movement. *Új Nemzedék* [New generation] May 31, 1938, 9. Kerkai, Farkas and Ugrin spoke at the parade. József Ugrin would come to criticize Nagy's representation of the event in his book, which cast him as organizing KALOT from the beginning. Apart from his own memoirs, Nagy cited this very article along with several others that do not mention him at all. However, Nagy did march with the young Jesuits at the Eucharistic Congress. József Ugrin, *Válasz Nagy Töhötöm: Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek c. könyvének KALOT-tal foglalkozó részére* [An answer to the parts on KALOT in the book Jesuits and freemasons by Töhötöm Nagy], 12–15. In *Bequest of József Ugrin.* National Archives of Hungary, henceforth MNL OL, P2369.; Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 27. Nagy's active participation in KALOT's organization cannot be dated any earlier than 1938 using the available primary sources. As such, the ambiguous phrasing in *Jesuits and Freemasons* can be seen as an *ex post* interpretation attempt on the part of Nagy.

own internal estimates, about 2,000 young peasant men had completed its leadership training in Szeged, 1,500 local organizations existed, and membership approached 150,000 people.[6]

Most of Nagy's duties at KALOT related to organizing and management, with Kerkai continuing to act as its "spiritual mover" and leader, even during his third probation.[7] Kerkai drafted a memorandum as to what was expected of Nagy the day he took over the movement's management. Under his watchful eye, his deputy would hold one-day KALOT training sessions for parish priests and teachers across the country, exercising professional control over every workshop. He would also "serve the same goal with his pen in his free time." In Kerkai's view, this meant that "serious people" could not call him a "prima donna" or "bohemian" owing to the considerable tasks he was to fulfill, a remark that is an interesting reflection of how Nagy was perceived within the order. This comes as little surprise, since Nagy was easy to communicate with and not averse to expressing himself either orally or in writing. Kerkai concluded his memo with a motto expressing what he expected of Nagy: "Everything on your own, but nothing independently!"[8]

Nagy could hardly wait to put himself to the test with KALOT after his final exams, confessing to his diary:

> Studying is really difficult for me. It takes a positively heroic effort to sit down with my books. It's so hard already! I'm thirty, and still have to study, and I have to finish it. In the meantime, the Agrarian Youth Movement rumbles next to me [...] I am already designated national secretary general after Fr Kerkai, so in three months I will assume spiritual and de facto leadership of a movement which develops, progresses, and is in full swing in such an extraordinary way. I am already

6 "Eloquent numbers," *Dolgozó Fiatalság* (1939/4): 1. Margit Balogh, in her work on KALOT she postulates that the numbers were to a certain degree exaggerated, however, owing to the fragmentary nature of primary KALOT sources, this can neither be verified nor disputed. Balogh, *A KALOT*, 86.

7 Kerkai was known as such in clerical circles as well. Pius Zimándi dubbed him KALOT's *spiritus movens*, while praising the movement in his diary. Zimándi, *Egy év története*, 523–24. Nagy was characterized as "a man of worldly devices" *Report.* Budapest, October 17, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 104.

8 *Jenő Kerkai's Memorandum.* [Budapest, 1938.] OSZK Kt., f. 216/365. Letter 1.

> aware of everything; comment on everything… how can I truly study *doctrina peripatetica* now?![9]

Accordingly, starting from the summer of 1938, Nagy threw himself into KALOT, in his own words, "like an arrow shot at a frantic pace."[10] At the same time, he also began teaching at the Jesuit college, while regularly keeping Kerkai informed in Budapest on KALOT's state of affairs. Owing to the manner in which he presented himself and his hard work, he was soon accepted by the movement. *Hivatásszervezet*'s [Association of parish vocational organizations'] journal, which also was started in Szeged, had an industrial section, which employed Nagy. In 1940, the following remarks about his work with their organization appeared:

> In the summer of 1938, Fr Jenő Kerkai, our founding president, went on a one-year spiritual retreat with his order, and was replaced by the young Society of Jesus priest, and lecturer of theology at Szeged, Fr Töhötöm Nagy. With his feverish work, day and night, with his constant activity and excellent rhetorical skills, he made an immeasurable difference in the life of the Szeged *Hivatásszervezet*. Fr Töhötöm Nagy has been on a nationwide organizing tour, and everywhere he appeared, his words were greeted with exuberant enthusiasm.[11]

This characterization was certainly true of Nagy's KALOT activities, which saw him progress towards his goals of becoming a renowned organizer, thereby fulfilling what his order expected of him.

The next step for KALOT, in full consideration of the peasantry's level of education and amount of work, was the creation of so-called people's colleges,[12] programs for which needed to be meticulously prepared.

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9 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] February 22, 1938. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13. *Doctrina peripatetica*: a reference to a branch of ancient Greek philosophy, and its place in theological studies.

10 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] February 22, 1938. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

11 Radnai, *A Hivatásszervezet*; OSZK Kt., f. 216/78, 4.

12 People's colleges were organized to develop new talent and elite education based on Danish and Finnish models. The first people's college was founded in 1914 in Kecskemét by the *Magyar Gazdaszövetség* [Hungarian Farmers' Association], but this proved unviable owing to the outbreak of World War I. People's colleges experienced renewed popularity during the Horthy era (1920–1944), being founded by various organizations, churches, and individuals. Papp, *A népi kollégiumi mozgalom*, 93–105. The first KALOT people's

The curriculum touched upon a wide range of subjects, from farming to finance to folk dance and even drama (a centuries long component of Jesuit education), as well as basic public health.[13] Settlement courses were also offered at some people's colleges, giving students an opportunity to put their acquired knowledge to practical use by working tracts of cooperatively leased land (similar to the Danish model). Despite its utilization of folk religiosity and church practices at the time of its foundation, KALOT was not a zealous or radical organization: unequivocal calls for land reform were a natural development of the organization's program. In fact, forging an authentic agrarian movement in Hungary in the 1930s[14] without touching upon this topic, however sensitive the issue was to the leadership of the Hungarian Catholic Church, would have been unthinkable.

Indeed, the Hungarian Catholic Church's leadership owned many large and prominent estates during the Horthy era.[15] As such, KALOT's outspoken stance vis-à-vis land ownership was no secret—Kerkai publicly spoke about it on numerous occasions, such as during his speech at Hősök tere (Heroes' Square) in Budapest, following the International Eucharistic Congress parade. There, he proclaimed to the world:

> We've been asked whom this movement serves. Our answer: it serves no one but God because this movement doesn't have lords, it only has laborers! For those who ask whom we organize against; we reply that we don't conspire against anyone, not against political parties, not against other organizations and movements, not for the protection of the old order, not even for the protection of Church estates![16]

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college opened in Érd in autumn 1940, with Prime Minister Pál Teleki speaking at the opening convocation. Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 28.

13 See e.g.: *Draft course on popular education,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/81. and Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 50–57.

14 On agrarian poverty see Gyáni, "Az agrárproletariátus," 280–94, and Nagy, *Földbirtokpolitika*.

15 The reaction of the Hungarian Church's leadership was deeply influenced by its status as one of the largest landowners in Hungary. Their only saving grace was that Church property was not held by a single person, but distributed among hundreds of ecclesiastical estates, revenues from which helped maintain (finance) the church's social and educational infrastructure. László, *Egyház és állam*, 231–36.

16 Jenő Kerkai's speech on the final day of the 1938 Eucharistic Congress, at the KALOT and EMSZO (Diocesan Workers' Departments) parade at Hősök tere, in Budapest. *Új Nemzedék*, May 31, 1938, 9.

Maintaining KALOT's ecclesiastical legitimacy presented a major challenge to the movement's leaders throughout its existence, owing to their dogmatic views on land ownership. On the one hand, KALOT was the modern, social face of the Church, with its loyalty to that institution beyond question. As a Catholic corporative movement, it preferred having its membership's support against political upheaval and the rise of extreme ideologies. Any or all of these aspects could have made KALOT valuable to the leadership of the Hungarian Catholic Church. At the same time, however, KALOT's fixation on the necessity and unavoidability of a land reform program, compounded by the solutions they proposed, did anything but endear them to certain members of the Catholic Conference of Bishops.

Gyula Glattfelder, Bishop of Csanád in Szeged, lent KALOT both abstract support, in the form of his personal authority, which saw their statutes approved by the Conference of Bishops,[17] along with financial aid. However, assistance for the movement required a continuous struggle, and, even then, was sporadic among the leading figures of the Hungarian Catholic Church. Nevertheless, as the movement grew in popularity, its viability and success saw it garner more and more clerical supporters, who in turn, provided it with increased financial aid and tracts of land. There was certainly no shortage of ideas as how best to utilize future donations: a KALOT model farm and a noodle factory were created, more people's colleges were set up, practice-oriented training was expanded, and newspapers[18] and cultural programs were further developed into forums for the transmission of folk culture.

It was around the same time that Hungarian politicians also began taking notice of the organization. As Nagy would later remark: "politicians with a keen sense of smell were sniffing around it, and soon KALOT could hardly hold a public event where they weren't courted by ministers and

17 *Alapszabály-tervezet* [Draft statutes]. Szeged, KALOT, 1937. OSZK Kt., f. 216/61. About Glattfelder's support: Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 13.

18 *Dolgozó Fiatalság* [Working youth] (popular name: Döfi) was published from 1936. In addition, KALOT also published newspapers/periodicals such as *Ifjúságunk* [Our youth]; *Forrás* (Spring)*/Forrástár* [Spring archive]*/KALOT Munkafüzet* [KALOT exercise book]; *Magyar Vetés* [Hungarian crop], and *Népünk* [Our people] directed at different audiences. KALOT also had publications for national minorities. Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 143–44.

heads of state."[19] The organization's leadership had their first meeting with members of the Imrédy government, the topic of which was social policy, in 1938–1939. KALOT's presence at the Eucharistic Congress, specifically the impassioned speeches of Kerkai and others, along with the sheer number of people mobilized, drew the government's attention. Police action at the parade provided Prime Minister Béla Imrédy with a reason to summon Kerkai for a meeting.[20] Kerkai used the audience to present the movement personally to the Catholic prime minister, then at the height of his power and popularity. Happily, Imrédy shared Kerkai's corporatist sentiments, paving the way for a mutually beneficial relationship between KALOT and the Imrédy premiership.[21]

The Catholic corporative movement had succeeded in preventing the spread of the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Party, making it highly appealing to the government on both political and social grounds. Imrédy promised KALOT financial support, with Kerkai drawing up a large-scale plan for how the funding would be put to use. Unfortunately, when the subvention arrived, it fell well short of expectations.[22] Still, the funding did allow KALOT to relocate its headquarters from Szeged to central Budapest (Cukor street) in autumn 1938, and to hire professional staff, both of which made managing the already nationwide movement far easier. For his part, Nagy was aware of Imrédy's 10,000 pengő (approximately US $50,000 in 2023) subsidy, noting in his diary how he became involved with maintaining contact with the prime minister.[23]

> During that time I was receiving a 2,000 pengő permanent allowance from Imrédy. Only Fr Provincial and Fr Kerkai knew about this. I entered the sum into the ledger, but attributed it to various names and addresses. At the time of Imrédy's downfall, Fr Kerkai, Fr Varga,

19 Töhötöm Nagy, *Korfordulón*, 51, and Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 274. In his memoirs, Ugrin describes these visits in a similar fashion: "We were somewhat happy with high-level visits, because lots of high-ranking functionaries came to us in the entourage, whom we could put to good use later in negotiating affairs of the movement." Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 126.

20 *Diary excerpt* Budapest, July 13, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/230.

21 Sipos, *Imrédy Béla*, 21–29.

22 Balogh, *A KALOT*, 76–79.

23 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] July 8, 1938. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

> and I agreed to remain loyal to him. Just before his downfall, he was at the height of his popularity [...] and since I was on good terms with him, I was the one to ask him to somehow, in a semi-clandestine manner, support our movements.[24]

In the summer of 1939, Nagy departed for Florence to spend a year there completing his tertiary. Upon his return to Hungary, he wrote to Imrédy.[25] However, KALOT never again aligned with Imrédy's goals and career trajectory, but rather, with those of his successor, Pál Teleki. Even as the clouds of war loomed dark above Europe, KALOT continued to develop, organizing in the territories that had been awarded to Hungary as part of the First and Second Vienna Agreements.[26] As a result, its membership rolls approached half a million supporters, with training conducted across twenty people's colleges.[27]

Against this spectacular growth, KALOT's leadership also made their first forays into clandestine or covert political matters. Under Teleki's premiership, KALOT, through the assistance it rendered to the National Policy Service, gained his confidence.[28] This marked the beginning of a new period in KALOT's history, as well as in Nagy's life. As he put the "final touches" on his tertiary, having returned from Italy, KALOT was conferred the status of a permanent Jesuit organization by the Society of Jesus, with Nagy officially named its national deputy leader.[29]

2.

While in Florence, Nagy learned of his new assignment in January 1940 from a letter sent by Kerkai. He also found out that others were forging alternative plans to make use of his skills within the Society of Jesus, and had even spoken to the Provincial Superior regarding what would hap-

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24 *Diary excerpt* [Szeged] July 8, 1938.
25 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Béla Imrédy.* Florence, June 30, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/230.
26 Hámori, "Magyar társadalomszervezési kísérletek," 65–97.
27 People's colleges were founded in Érd, Szeged, Zirc, Palicsfürdő (Palić, Serbia), Jánosi, Csíksomlyó (Şumuleu, Romania) (1941), Balatonberény, Püspöknádasd, Hajdúdorog, Eger, Kisunyom, Egyházasfalu, Vértesacsa, Kassa (Košice, Slovakia), Vágsellye (Šaľa, Slovakia) (1942), Kecskemét, Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare, Romania), Szilágysomlyó (Şimleu Silvaniei, Romania), Ungvár (Uzhhorod, Ukraine), and Endrőd. Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 120.
28 Hámori, "Kísérlet," 353–82.
29 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Béla Imrédy.* Florence, June 30, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/230.

pen after his tertiary: Fr Bangha, by then gravely ill, in Kerkai's words "wanted to catch Töhi [a short version of Töhötöm – É.P.], but Fr Provincial replied [to Bangha] that he's already ashore..."[30] Later, Fr Bangha's letter, in which the dying Jesuit asked his younger confrere to assist him in editing *Magyar Kultúra* upon his return, also reached Nagy, a month before Bangha's death. [31] As during his novitiate, Nagy had regularly visited Bangha and knew well of his protracted battle against leukemia, which was in an advanced stage.[32] Reading between the lines, Nagy was aware that this invitation was Bangha's way of feeling him out as a successor.

Understandably, Nagy was hesitant and torn: On the one hand, he had felt a connection to Bangha since his Jesuit awakening, and knew that he was skilled at writing and journalism. At the same time, he had also experienced the thrill of leading a movement and engaging in field work while acting as Kerkai's deputy. From Kerkai's letter, it was clear that the Provincial Superior had already decided, committing Nagy to KALOT, which, according to the martial tenets of Jesuit obedience, meant that his only formal action was to acknowledge his superior's decision. However, inner acceptance of the assignment was a different matter entirely and required Nagy to forgo several ideas he had about his own future.

Compounding this, Nagy had to diplomatically refuse Bangha's offer. Kerkai's insistence on Nagy signaled an appreciation of his work with KALOT thus far, and more, since he emphatically expressed what he thought of Nagy's role in the future in relation to his own:

> I must mention something which is somewhat awkward for me. It is Fr Provincial's repeated and express wish, that in our collaboration, I be the primus inter pares.[33] I believe you're supernatural enough[34] to accept this, and I respect you enough that this relationship will be almost invisible. Both of us will consider this the will of God. I remem-

30 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy,* Budapest, January 4, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365, 4.
31 *Béla Bangha's letter to Töhötöm Nagy,* Budapest, March 30, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.
32 "I help Fr Bangha all the time, I care for him. I take him to hospital, and helped change his bandages at home. [...] I feel a deep compassion for Fr Bangha, I can see his physique almost collapsing... Fr Bangha doesn't know he's gravely ill...." *Diary excerpts*. [Szeged] 17 and 18 January 1937. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.
33 *primus inter pares* = first among equals
34 Here: self-control.

> ber old man Elek Velős's witty remark at Laci Miklós's wedding: both are the first like the first houses on either side of a street, but still, one is number one, the other is number two....[35]

As can be seen, Nagy, nearing the end of his tertiary, had received two promising and equally enticing offers, leaving him at a crossroads, even though the superior's decision strongly guided him in one direction. He wondered whether his true path was practical life and organizing—the way the Provincial Superior (and Kerkai) saw it—or, instead, if it lay in writing and intellectual activity and the road Bangha was attempting to nudge him towards, as he had earlier believed. According to his diary entries, he seriously contemplated this, since, up to that point, his life had unfolded differently than he had originally imagined. As he wrote, "Fr Kerkai knows full well that I wasn't intended for the movement, and that I'd rather go with Fr Bangha [...] He tried me out, and I performed well. I could say it was for the 'worse', since Fr Provincial forgot my former goals, and promised me to Fr Kerkai."[36]

Finally he thought it best to write humbly to Bangha: Whatever the decision might be, he would obey his superior's will. Nonetheless, Bangha took this as an affirmation of his own plans, since Nagy also wrote him "under confessional secrecy" that for him it would be "the sacrifice of a lifetime, if he were to go to the movement."[37] However, Bangha only discovered the Provincial Superior's decision later, if at all, and, nearing death, never took any additional steps to coax Nagy towards *Magyar Kultúra*.

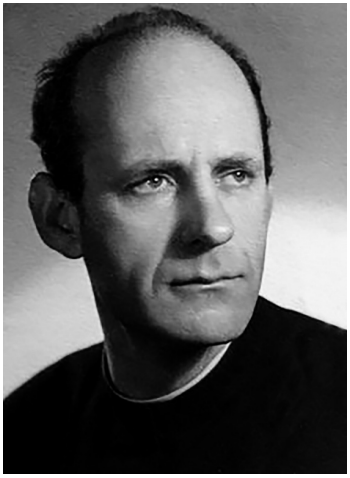
"To leave the works I had begun, even if I thought them the most important, to others, my friends, a little to my superiors. I didn't do it for myself, if Jesus says: enough—I have no reason to cling to them." With these words, Bangha made peace with his earthly troubles.[38]

Finally, a decision was reached, leaving Nagy with nothing to do but keep Bangha's wishes private and attempt to live them while working at his

35 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Budapest, January 4, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365. 4.
36 *Diary excerpt* [Florence], March 28, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.
37 *Diary excerpt* [Florence], March 28, 1940, and *Béla Bangha's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Budapest, March 30, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.
38 *Béla Bangha's diary entry* [Budapest], February 23, 1940. In Molnár and Szabó, *Bangha Béla*, 319. Bangha died on 30 April 1940.

new position, thus synthesizing the two offers. "I know there's someone at home in the Province who wants to be Bangha the Second, and is training as a rhetorician," he wrote in his diary after Bangha's death, having read domestic reports on his funeral. "But that person is wrong, very wrong, there is no need for that special apologetic work in that way today. Fr Bangha felt the times changing, and in 'World-Conquering Christianity'[39] he outlined different paths than those that are of critical importance now. Today, if one wants to be as great as Fr Bangha was, one shouldn't train as a rhetorician, but as an organizer." [...] Revitalized Catholicism—Fr Bangha's work—must be held together as an organism and an organization."[40]

Rather obviously, Nagy internally accepted his role as the organizer of a popular Catholic movement, justifying it as correlating to Bangha's legacy. Facing the figurative fork in the road, he chose KALOT, a movement that was to play a leading, irreversible, and unmistakable role in his life. Still, he confessed to his diary at around the same time that he planned to write the second part to Bangha's *World-Conquering Christianity.*[41] For an unforeseeable period of time, however, the creation of that or any substantial written work remained an untenable dream.



Töhötöm Nagy around 1940

39 Béla Bangha's work published in 1940.

40 *Diary excerpt* [Florence], May 23, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13. *World-conquering Christianity* is the title of a monograph by Béla Bangha, published in 1940.

41 *Diary excerpt* [Florence], July 8, 1940. OSZK Kt., f. 216/13.

3.

Nagy returned from Florence to the hustle and bustle of work in the summer of 1940. Both his and Kerkai's lifestyles had to be fundamentally adjusted to the demands posed by KALOT:

> [o]ur individual Jesuit life was completely accustomed to this truly frantic work. We enjoyed the full support of our superiors. Our liberty, as is the time-tested practice of our order, was complete, but at the same time we knew that disciplinary or spiritual lapses would see us ejected from KALOT without mercy. [...] The order taught us that nobody was irreplaceable, and we never thought of ourselves as such. We got up at dawn, completed our one-hour meditation, and celebrated mass, but we enjoyed complete freedom in this. [...] We would arrive so late for lunch that even second lunch was over by then. But the lay brothers liked us very much [...], they reheated food for us, and this thoughtfulness was greatly appreciated. [...] We also used to arrive in the evening at random times, and Liptay, the doorman brother, had to get out of bed on freezing winter nights to open the gate for us. [...] We begged his pardon, but he did it happily, as he was our greatest supporter."[42]

During this period, the greatest challenge KALOT's leadership faced was organizing in northern Transylvania, a territory populated by a significant Hungarian-speaking minority that had been awarded to Hungary by Nazi Germany and Italy in August 1940.[43] Nagy traveled there in early October 1940, to hold a string of one-day conferences propagating the corporative movement, visiting more than a dozen locations between October 16 and November 4.[44] He also gathered first-hand information

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42 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 81–82, and Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 115–16.

43 While an agent, "Zoltán Berényi" mentioned Nagy's Transylvanian tour some 20 years after the fact: "After the re-annexation of Transylvania, Töhötöm Nagy was active there, himself being a Szekler." *Report.* Budapest, August 30, 1961. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-32398/3. 25.

44 He held lectures at Csíkszentmárton (Sânmartin), Kászon (Plăieșii de Jos), Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc), Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), Karcfalva (Cârța), Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni), Gyergyóditró (Ditrău), Gyergyóalfalu (Joseni), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș), Mikháza (Călugăreni), Parajd (Praid), Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), Barót (Baraolt), and Gyimesközéplok (Lunca de Jos). *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Kézdivásárhely, 20 October 1940. In Nagy, *Korfordulón,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/185. 59–81. And on the same: Töhötöm Nagy. *Székelyföldön működő KALOT beszá-*

on the situation in northern Transylvania following its annexation to Hungary, sharing his experience with Kerkai:

> [b]ut this journey from Kolozsvár to Csíkszereda will have been the most horrible one in my life.[45] Two whole nights were behind me, I was exhausted, and then we left at dawn, only arrived at two in the morning the next day. There were so many of us for the last three hours, we stood like people in the streetcar on the boulevard in Budapest when it's packed. [...] Squeezed together, I learned everything about my immediate neighbor on their home village, how much their income is, how they live, what organizations they have, how they feel about reforms, and so on.[46]

Using these authentic insights into local conditions, Nagy always offered concrete solutions during his lectures, promoting KALOT and making it appear as an attractive option. "You should have seen, Father, how the priests' eyes lit up when I was talking about the rabbit pelt trade: Now y'er talking, remarked elderly Balázs Lajos. There won't be enough [rabbit] pens for our boys, said another one. Then they asked when they could come to this people's college."[47]

Prime Minister Teleki's support was pivotal in organizing the Csíksomlyó Székely people's college, which opened its doors in 1941.[48] Apart from localized vocational training, one of the topics at Csíksomlyó—as at other people's colleges—was countering the spread of far-right wing movements, a mission KALOT fully embraced. This was important in northern Transylvania, since the youth organization needed to keep its members away from the ideas of the Arrow Cross Party and to inform people

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molója a Nemzetpolitikai Szolgálattal kapcsolatos munkáiról [KALOT's report on work in connection to the National Policy Service in Szeklerland], [no place] April 23, 1941. OSZK Kt., f. 216/66.

45 Now, with the benefit of knowing of his subsequent travels, he would likely rescind this judgement.

46 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 61.

47 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 70–71.

48 The building was designed by architect, writer, illustrator, ethnologist, and politician Károly Kós, with a woodcarving course offered by Jenő Szervátiusz, "the most Transylvanian Hungarian sculptor." Farkas and Ugrin, "Ötven éve," 252. és Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 124–125. About Teleki's support see Kovrig, *Katolikus demokratikus és szociális reformmozgalmak Magyarországon*, 359.

about "the dangers of the extremist movements."[49] Nagy reported on this public sentiment to Kerkai: "[t]he basis of our movement could be the Szeklers. They couldn't care less about the Arrow Cross Party. They're much too independent to believe this nonsense. But there is huge desperation on account of financial misery. They expect something big, a miracle."[50]

In a six-page summary, created specifically for the National Policy Service, Nagy reported on his experience, sharing detailed information on the spread of the Arrow Cross Party's platform in northern Transylvania. He traveled to northern Transylvania again in the spring of 1941 for orientation purposes, covering 124 settlements in 11 days, together with 12 staff members. He reported finding Arrow Cross influence in 17 locations.[51]

To counter the rise of the Arrow Cross movement, as well as Hitler's influence, serious governmental efforts were launched under Teleki's premiership. However, the gap between Teleki's approach and the more lenient domestic and foreign policy approach favored by the rest of the government became so overwhelming that the prime minister moved to assert his ideas through a clandestinely organized "spiritual national defense."[52] Under the guise of the prime minister's office, this was coordinated by the head of the National Policy Service, the Catholic social politician Béla Kovrig.[53] Incidentally, Kovrig also headed the office to which Nagy sent his Transylvanian reports.[54]

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49 Nagy, *Székelyföldön működő KALOT,* [no place] April 23, 1941. OSZK Kt., f. 216/66. 2.

50 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 69.

51 Where possible, Nagy named not only the location, but also the Arrow Cross proponents or instigators, also estimating how much influence they wielded. Töhötöm Nagy, *Székelyföldön működő KALOT* [no place] April 23, 1941. OSZK Kt., f. 216/66. 2–3.

52 Department IV of Information was created under the leadership of Domokos Szent-Iványi. Szent-Iványi reported in detail on Teleki's plans to develop "visible and underground resistance." Domokos Szent-Iványi, *Teleki megindítja a szervezett ellenállást a hitleri befolyással szemben* [Teleki sparks organized resistance to counter Hitler's influence]. Ráday Archive, documents of Domokos Szent-Iványi. C-80. 2. box. 17–34. On the Catholic aspects of "spiritual national defense" see László, "Adatok" [1978], and László, "Adatok" [1979].

53 Béla Kovrig (1900–1962), was a sociologist, social politician, and university lecturer. A prominent proponent of Catholic sociology in the interwar period, he drafted social policy legislation as vice-chairman of the National Social Security Institute, head of Department V for Social Policy, and later as chief of the National Policy Service. He was also one of the founders of the (Christian) Democratic People's Party. See Kovrig, "Katolikus demokratikus és szociális reformmozgalmak."

54 Ugrin recalls that it was his task, among others, to board trains at Hegyeshalom (near the Third Reich's border) bound for Budapest in order to assess the mood of migrant work-

Nagy spent considerable time in his Transylvanian homeland, working hard, but also enjoying his travels. "Nae. Now, I should say. I am in a pittance of a Székely village amidst the snowy peaks."—he reported on Christmas in Gyergyóújfalu (Suseni) in typical Szekler style. "I have travelled by sleigh, around 40 furlongs. I arrive, they before me. I ask: Eh? Ay-up, they answer. Me again: I have come from Budapest to ye. So then, they said, there was going to be a grand service in their little temple with the pinnacle. Then the village foreman, Szeklers of course, as we all are in this place, there's nobody else, led me with pomp and glowing joy into the celebratory room, which is better than yours, lord-like, with lots of cushioning. They did everything to please me. We fasted, I should say, and so we wouldn't fall asleep, carolers came, to whom we gave nuts, donuts, poppy cake, and pennies. Then we set off to church and on with Christus natus est [...]. And the Szeklers rose with dignity and wondering contemplation on the wings of the angelic harmonies, but then Thee O God We Praise started, and the church almost collapsed. Mass properly in Latin, as one does. [...] After, I was offered stuffed cabbages, that smelt right [...]. Afterwards, I lay me down, and when time was ripe, up, and on to high mass, like they do here, big festival, short word. Then on to the sleigh, down the snowy peaks, and back on the train..."[55]

He would return to Hungary proper intermittently, organizing the movement and founding the Szekler people's college, before returning to Transylvania again. This shuttling between his "home home" and "home away from home" went on for some time. News of Teleki's death eventually reached Nagy while he was in Transylvania, in a letter sent by Kerkai,[56] who wrote: "We have just come from Prime Minister Teleki's funeral. Air-raid sirens were heard throughout. I can tell you, he presented himself as a truly great Hungarian, even in his tragic death. I believe he faced God

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ers returning from the West. These reports also went to Kovrig. See Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 125.

55 *"Nagy Töhötöm lófőszékely" levele plébánosokhoz* ["Töhötöm Nagy, Szekler Lord's" letter to parish priests], Gyergyóújfalu, 25 December 1940. OSZK. Kt., f. 216/264. Postscript says: "Don't seek typographical errors in this letter, as there are none."

56 Teleki committed suicide on April 3, 1941 after Germany attacked Yugoslavia through Hungarian territory. Teleki strongly objected to Hungarian participation in the invasion of Yugoslavia, because on behalf of the Hungarian government he had signed a non-aggression pact with Yugoslavia in December 1940.

with a clear conscience! Even if he was objectively wrong in the principle: we shouldn't do bad, so it turns into good. He wanted to place an exclamation point in blood in front of the Hungarians of hesitant inner life, and convince other countries of the Hungarian position."[57]

With Teleki's death, KALOT lost an influential patron. However, their task remained unchanged, in fact growing in importance after the tragic event. KALOT now had to navigate increasingly difficult conditions to continue operating, in a country that had foolishly allowed itself to be drawn into war.

4.

With Teleki's death and Béla Kovrig's retirement from office,[58] KALOT lost two key governmental supporters. Imrédy had supported KALOT owing to his affinity for corporative Catholicism; Teleki's assistance was cemented by the movement's popular educational nature; however, the next two Hungarian prime ministers, László Bárdossy and Miklós Kállay, saw matters differently.[59] The moment Hungary entered World War II on the side of Nazi Germany, a movement that was able to mobilize masses, but which was not controlled by the state and was disposed to express what were considered radical social ideas, swiftly fell out of favor.

The resulting financial losses were recuperated partly by an increase in ecclesiastical funding, but also thanks to an agreement concluded between KALOT and the Levente Associations, formally gathered under the National Center for Paramilitary Education of Hungarian Youth (hereafter LOK) signed on October 18, 1941. LOK's uncompromising approach to organizing the Hungarian youth had threatened KALOT for years, with local rivalries sometimes leading to serious conflicts. Even though the defense minister had issued a decree that LOK members could also join religious associations (such as KALOT), it was feared that LOK ultimately sought KALOT's destruction (along with that of other religious movements).[60]

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57 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy,* Budapest, April 7, 1941. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365.

58 The National Policy Service ceased to exist upon Teleki's death. Kovrig relocated to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), teaching sociology at the university there, before becoming dean, and later rector. Kerekes, "Kovrig Béla," 247–68. (Jenő Kerekes provides the wrong year for Kovrig's birth; he was born in 1900).

59 Balogh, *A KALOT*, 112–14.

60 Balogh, *A KALOT*, 116–21.

Negotiations between LOK and KALOT began in the summer of 1941, with Nagy's direct participation.[61] The resulting agreement reflected the asymmetrical position of the two organizations: KALOT acknowledged that wartime circumstances required increased military training for the youth and offered its infrastructure and staff to implement the program designed together with LOK. However, KALOT could continue operating, which meant founding several new people's colleges while maintaining the existing ones, and even create an experimental settlement.[62] The contract was signed by Kerkai and Nagy on behalf of KALOT, and commander István Kudriczy[63] and Vitéz Alajos Béldy, Head of Military Training and Physical Education of the Youth (IHNETOV), as LOK's representatives.[64]

It is clear from Nagy's letter to a confrere that they hoped to move LOK towards their own positions whenever joint courses were held: "KALOT is unfolding at breakneck speed. Spectacularly. All usable priests will be submitted to a one-week course at Érd paid for by the Levente Associations (5 pengős per person per day). Presidential course for the Levente Associations. [...] We will instill KALOT's ideas within them too, second to none. This winter, we will put 5,600 youth leader Leventes through our 17 people's colleges at our 21-day course, funded by the Levente Associations. We have organized the whole thing."[65]

In more ways than one, Nagy saw the collaboration as an opportunity, rather than a constraint. His Provincial Superior prohibited him from travelling to Florence and Weimar, where the Italian fascist *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* and the *Hitlerjugend* (respectively) held youth assemblies; how-

61 Alajos Béldy represented LOK's leadership, while Nagy spoke for KALOT. As Béldy recalls, Nagy first visited him on 13 August 1941 to discuss the agreement between the two organizations. See Blasszauer, *Az IHNETOV.* Alajos Béldy (1889–1946), was an athlete, sports manager, and later military officer. In 1945, he was sentenced to life as a war criminal by the people's court for ordering Leventes to the front but died in a prison infirmary in 1946.

62 The KALOT-village was created outside Egeg, in Bars County (then Upper Hungary, later Czechoslovakia, now Slovakia).

63 István Kudriczy (1896–1969) was a military officer. He served as staff colonel of the 40th [Infantry] Division from 1 August 1941, while also being national commander of the Levente Associations. After World War II, he spent 12 years in a prison after being charged as a war criminal before emigrating to the United States.

64 Historical literature and contemporary recollections are divided on the agreement. Nagy does not mention it in his book *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* although the text of the agreement was available, and a copy was found in his personal archive. OSZK Kt., f. 216/67.

65 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Miklós Őry.* Budapest, September 18, 1942. OSZK Kt., f. 216/259.

ever, he did help prepare the Hungarian delegation. Nagy was able to go to Finland with Béldy and the new Hungarian group.[66]

> The great Weimar-Florence spiritual Olympiad was organized by KALOT, and me especially. I had to be team leader as well because I prepared the competition, but Fr Provincial didn't let me go. I could hardly talk Béldy out of going straight to His Excellency the Primate, he wanted to get me out so badly. Once again, I'm preparing the team, and this time Fr Provincial will let me go. We leave on 17 October and return mid-November. I will hold a lecture entitled 'Hungarian Soul in the Mirror of Folk Art.' We have a beautiful presentation and exhibition. It will be held at the Finnish National Theater.[67]

Folk dancer István Molnár, one of KALOT's artistic directors taught choreography of a Hungarian folk ballad, originally created for KALOT boys, to students from the Györffy-college who were also part of the delegation. Nagy became such good friends with the Györffy-college students that he was invited to join the college's patron organization[68] and represented KALOT at the 1942 Balatonszárszó meeting. The one-week camp, organized by the Calvinist student movement, *Soli Deo Gloria,*[69] launched a forum to become involved in substantive dialog on national issues, having listened to lectures by populist writers. Nagy met the writer László Németh, who wrote of their conversation in his memoir, there:

> Even from the discussion with the leader of the Catholic KALOT—invited by Püski—something sprang forth. This is religion, but not Christianity said the pretty smart Jesuit, when I told him my theory on religious instinct, and the way they tend them nowadays, as if giving him my card in a theological way. This was a rejection on his part,

66 *Unkarin „Levente"-nuoriso tervehtii Suomen veljeskansa* [Hungarian Levente youth greets its Finnish sibling]. Poster, 1942. OSZK Small print collection.

67 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Miklós Őry.* Budapest, September 18, 1942. OSZK Kt., f. 216/259.

68 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 111. Bolyai/István Györffy College was founded in 1940 as a precursor to the people's colleges. Papp, *A népi kollégiumi mozgalom*, 166–68.

69 On the history of Soli Deo Gloria, which organized the "Szárszó meetings" see Havas and Kulifay, *A Soli Deo Gloria szövetség.* About the relations of SDG and KALOT, see Petrás, "Találkozások."

> of course; but a desire stirred in me, to rescue out of the wreckage of world views which bring dissent for the youth billowing around me that which is really vital in religion.[70]

Nagy, the "pretty smart Jesuit," received so deep an inspiration from Hungarian folk culture that he and Ugrin enrolled in a doctoral course on folklore in Budapest.[71] However, the war dashed these plans: His doctorate in folklore remained unfinished, and as more and more of KALOT's boys were drafted, emphasis shifted to adapting the organization's work to wartime realities. "One day two, the next day three SAS's[72] appeared at the site, and we were running out of men. They were all taken by the black train to the Don river. To die for nothing. But there was nothing we could do against these small pieces of paper. War was stronger than KALOT. The happy, optimistic family homes turned into a colony of women. No men remained. Agricultural work was left to young, inexperienced women, who tried to keep up, but slowly grew exhausted. They went to more protected places. Their family homes. The front was approaching with fearful speed, and eventually it came to be: 'the ground crumbled into a million clods!'"[73]

5.

By summer 1943, in the midst of Miklós Kállay's tenure as premier, it became apparent, not only for government officials and the opposition, but also for the leadership of Catholic popular movements, that the war had come to a turning point and the military defeat of the Germans was only a question of time. Hungary and the Hungarian Catholic Church both had to prepare for the consequences. This realization encouraged the leadership of the corporative movements and Béla Kovrig, who had remained in intensive contact with them even after the end of Teleki's National Policy Service, to seek opportunities for collaboration. Kovrig

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70 Németh, *Homályból homályba*, 617–18.

71 Ugrin reports that they were unable to complete the doctoral program owing to wartime conditions. Ugrin: *Reply... Op. cit.* In *Bequest of Ugrin.* 74.

72 SAS = "Sürgős, Azonnal Siess!" [Urgent, come at once!], acronym based on the words seen on draft notices.

73 Ugrin's remarks on the end of KALOT's Egeg experimental settlement. Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 188.

and his team wanted to involve those members of the Church who played an active political and social role. As Kovrig recalls, they decided on collaborating in May 1943, after meeting with the bishop of Győr, Vilmos Apor.[74]

The stated aim of the collaboration was to create a working group of KALOT, EMSZO,[75] and *Hivatásszervezet*, the three corporative Catholic movements. On June 23, 1943, a memorandum was sent to Primate Jusztinián Serédi, the head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, on the movements' behalf which declared:

> [w]e have formed a working group comprised of the leaderships of EMSZO, KALOT and *Hivatásszervezet*, so that the leaders of the three movements, in constant communication, take the same position on the most important issues, and combat those who don't look for solutions of issues of national importance according to Christian ethics. We believe that with regards to the present, and even more so to the future, closer collaboration between these three brotherly groups is of crucial importance.[76]

After Serédi approved the initiative, Kovrig, the lay leader of the working group, Bishop Apor, its church patron, and Kerkai, the brains behind the effort, convened a secret meeting in late August at the Bishop's Castle in Győr. This coincided with the Szárszó meeting and included 23 participants. The meeting and what was discussed remained strictly confidential; however, its significance later became apparent: It was one of the first negotiating forums that called for preparing the Hungarian Catholic Church for the postwar period.[77]

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74 Kovrig, *Katolikus demokratikus és szociális reformmozgalmak Magyarországon*, 361–62.

75 EMSZO = *Egyházközségi Munkásszakosztályok* [Diocesan Workers' Departments]. A Catholic corporative movement that primarily catered to young industrial workers. Its central secretary was István Vida, one of Kerkai and Nagy's former students at Kalocsa.

76 Primate's Archives of Esztergom (henceforth PL), 8118/1944 (relisted from 5418/1943 to the 1944 correspondence.)

77 Cf.: Klestenitz, Petrás and Soós, *Útkeresés*. The complete list of participants at the 1943 meeting remains unknown. Vilmos Apor, József Mindszenty, Szaléz Kiss OFM, Jenő Kerkai SJ, László Varga SJ, Béla Kovrig, József Közi Horváth, Zsigmond Mihalovics, Béla Varga, Brúnó Balassa, Miklós Pfeiffer, Imre Sándor (delegated by Áron Márton), Miklós Beresztóczy, Sándor Meggyesi, József Freesz, István Vida are known to have been present. Töhötöm Nagy was not in attendance since he was ill, as reported in the Jesuit chroni-

Töhötöm Nagy as "a driver in the Csonka Machine Factory" in 1944

At the meeting, the Catholic Social People's Movement (KSZN), a federation of Catholic movements playing specific roles, was established.[78] The KSZN sought to promote Catholic organizations and movements in reviving the country's society and democracy. At Győr, the imperative of putting Catholic politics on new foundations was declared. Ultimately, the meeting went beyond just coordinating efforts among the movements, and instead led to the formation of a new Christian party to represent Christian interests. Nagy later wrote in his diary: "KALOT had planned on starting a new political party from the beginning. Our idea was to train a team of political leaders in local/rural matters and create a need among the rural masses for a political party whose program would be the same as our goals."[79]

Creating a modern Christian party built on KALOT's masses, different in its spiritual foundations than the conservative Christian parties of the Horthy era, was difficult for several reasons, and later attempted by the (Christian) Democratic People's Party.[80] The main tasks—planning for after the war, and blunting Nazi attempts to take over the country—

cle. Diarium Residentiae Budapestiensis ab anno 1926 usque ad annum 1944. JTMRL II. 4.1. Diarium 1943.

78 Gergely, "Katolikus hivatásrendi mozgalmak," 40.

79 *Diary excerpt,* Budapest, February 27, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

80 Izsák, *A Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt*.

were more pressing in 1943, with the meeting signaling the beginning of true collaboration among the organizations whose representatives had been present at Győr.[81]

As Nagy took his solemn eternal vow on February 2, 1944 at the Jesuits' Church of the Sacred Heart on Mária Street, Budapest, becoming a Jesuit Father of four vows,[82] Hungary's situation grew even more precarious. The KSZN needed the active participation of every human resource, including Nagy. However, this was risky, and grew even more so following the German occupation of March 19, 1944.[83] In 1944, KSZN led what, in practical terms, amounted to an illegal existence.[84] In July 1944, Kovrig moved to Esztergom, living in a flat belonging to the Primate Palace, so that he could continue his efforts at coordinating. With the approval of the KSZN's leadership, he contacted the Hungarian Front, which organized resistance, and the participation of the KSZN therein was acknowledged by Primate Serédi.[85] The Hungarian Front's leaflets were printed at KALOT's Kispest press, and distributed, among others, by members of the Catholic Social People's Movement—such as KALOT.[86] In September, 1944, Nagy himself took to the road to help KSZN, travelling across Transdanubia to inform people about the war's true perspectives, and to encourage them to stand their ground.[87] But as the front reached Hungary, KALOT's leadership decided to concentrate their own efforts on preserving their movement.

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81 Kovrig was to draft the movement's program. The abridged version of this became the pamphlet *Merre megyünk?* [Where are we going?] published in December 1943. One year later, Kovrig published a multi-author, more comprehensive work, which offered a multifaceted analysis of the interwar period. Among others, KALOT joined in printing and distributing these publications. Kovrig, *Merre megyünk?*, and the part written by Kovrig published separately as well. Kovrig, *Magyar társadalompolitika*.

82 *Text of Solemn Eternal Vow,* Budapest, February 2, 1944. OSZK Kt., f. 216/9.

83 This was the first time Nagy procured false identification. Examples include Sándor Nagy "assistant (factory worker)," driver at the Csonka machine factory, and a certificate from the *Hivatásszervezet* declaring that he was a member of the iron and metal department. *Identifications,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/2.

84 The Hungarian Catholic antifascism followed a similar theoretical trend and activity as many of its Western European counterparts. For these see Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, 161–69.

85 Szecskó, "Kovrig Béla."

86 According to Kovrig's data, 200,000 copies of the pamphlet *Felhívás Magyarország népéhez* [An appeal to the people of Hungary] were printed and distributed. Later Árpád Szakasits confirmed Kovrig's participation in these in a statement, and through him, that of the KSZN. *Statement,* February 22, 1945. George Demmer's private collection, Ottawa, Canada.

87 *Diary excerpt,* Budapest, February 27, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. and Tóth, *Emlékezés*, 160–61.

III.

Either Side of the Front

> *"Some movement leaders need to go to the Soviet Army at once and get into contact with them. Fight for our lives...! Will you do it?.... I've already borrowed Töhi from the Provincial. He's a Jesuit. He can officially go on KALOT's behalf [...] I am convinced—Kerkai continued— that if he doesn't get a political party behind us in the near future, we can and will lose our social fortresses as well."*[1]

1.

By late October, 1944, the Red Army controlled about a third of Hungary, with the rapid shifts in the front lines bringing the military defeat of the *Wehrmacht* ever closer.[2] KALOT leadership tried to prepare as well as it could for future events, by attempting to determine what its next steps should be. Ugrin summed up the objectives:

> [The] Central Council [of KALOT] issues the following order on 30 October 1944. Fr Töhötöm Nagy and József Ugrin shall, by any means necessary, reach the Soviet army, establish our movement's credentials, and contact anyone in the temporary capital (Debrecen) who might play a role in breathing new life into Hungary. Verify our right to exist as individuals, as well as a social and political organization. Ensure the authority of our movement and revive our paralyzed associations. Fr

1 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 190.
2 In late October 1944 the frontline in Hungary largely corresponded to the Tisza River. Ungváry, *Magyarország*, 78–83.

> Nagy should proceed on behalf of KALOT, and Ugrin on behalf of KALOT and the new Christian Democratic People's Party.[3]

A few days after Ugrin's decision, he left Budapest with Nagy on a motorcycle, with the goal of crossing the front and fulfilling their assignment.[4] At the same time, Jenő Kerkai was also heading towards the front, crossing the Danube at Dunaföldvár with Sándor Meggyesi,[5] and reaching Debrecen via Szeged by Christmas. There, on December 28th, he began negotiations with Ferenc Erdei on behalf of the Interim National Cabinet.[6] However, returning to early November, as Nagy and Ugrin left for Miskolc, they had known nothing of the outcome of Kerkai's journey. This endowed them with even more determination and hope that one, or both, of them would succeed.

Nagy and Ugrin travelled first towards Gödöllő, against the tide of fleeing civilians as well as the shattered and retreating German and Hungarian formations. They tried to advance as part of a column of vehicles, overtaking the Germans and Hungarians one by one on their motorcycle. From Gödöllő,[7] they went to Hatvan and Gyöngyös, with the war's devastation growing increasingly apparent. "Dead horses in the trenches. Cars in pieces on the side of the road. There's an overturned truck, no one even tried to right it. Its more noble bits were taken away, while its former owners latched on to other trucks. A couple of poor refugees among the many military vehicles. 4–5 children in bedsheets, women with tears in their eyes, and desperate, despondent men."[8]

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3 Ugrin, *Reply… op. cit.* In *Bequest of Ugrin,* 41.

4 Ugrin states that this occurred on October 31, 1944, while Nagy's diary notes November 2 as the date of their departure. In Margit Balogh's book (Balogh, *A KALOT*) October 30 is indicated. Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 191; Töhötöm Nagy, *Diary of Crossing the Front,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/47. 2. Nagy's diary was written after the fact, using contemporary notebook entries. *Pocket calendars,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11. and Balogh, *A KALOT*, 161. *Diary of Crossing the Front* was published by Margit Balogh: Nagy, *Az arcvonalon*.

5 Sándor Meggyesi (1901–1980), was an organizer of KALOT and other Catholic social youth movements among Hungarian minority groups in Czechoslovakia, as well as a teacher.

6 Meggyesi, "Az út vége." On the ecclesiastical reception of wartime conditions in South-Eastern Hungary see Zombori, *A katolikus egyház,* 285–94.

7 Another cleric, the Premonstratensian Pius Zimándi, observed and noted the scene prevailing around Gödöllő at the same time. For his diary see Zimándi, *Egy év története*.

8 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/47, 3.

Sometime later, Ugrin hitched a ride in a truck, relieving the burden on Nagy and his motorcycle. The two agreed to meet in Miskolc. As Nagy advanced alone in the late autumn drizzle, the situation did not grow any easier for him:

> [the] congestion was so intense sometimes, that a tank almost ran me over. I screamed at the top of my lungs, I could only jerk my motorcycle to the side so that the tank's tracks brushed the sole of my shoe. [...] Another time I was forced off the road into the mud, but the small car lurched behind me, and I rolled into the ditch, landing knee-deep in water and mud. How I toiled until I pushed the motorcycle out, and how I had to wait and struggle to find a place in the unending convoy of vehicles again.[9]

Nagy arrived in Miskolc on November 4, where Ugrin had already been waiting for him. Both lodged at the Szatmár community of the Daughters of Charity, waiting for the most opportune moment to cross the front. Nagy described the general church experience there, stating that "a divinity teacher gave me a cassock. I put on a priest's hat and coat, because it was better from the Soviet point of view if I faced them as a cleric."[10] The nuns were happy with the men's presence as well, with Ugrin recalling that "Töhi was a welcome guest at the monastery. His person meant daily Holy Mass and Holy Communion for the sisters. And one more man came in handy in such bleak times, though courage was something the sisters didn't lack."[11]

Still, difficult days lay ahead, since Miskolc was about to become a battlefield:

> Constant, distant artillery fire. We don't even notice anymore. Everyone wants to loot or flee. It's a sad sight when the most hideous human passions come rolling down the honest streets of a decent city." [...] Since

9 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 3.

10 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 4. Red Army soldiers generally seemed to have respected those wearing priestly garb, according to ecclesiastical experiences. Bánkuti, "Frontátvonulás," 419.

11 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 193.

> November 15th, the explosions have been incessant; the Germans are detonating explosives at the railyard and the radio tower. Bridges, public utilities, and factories are all mined. Terror is rampant in the city…"[12]

The approaching battle also forced them to find a shelter. "By November 19th Russian shelling had become so intense, that we found it best to move into the cellar. One hit closer, another farther, there was one explosion after the other."[13]

Nagy also reported on everyday life in the shelter. "One could write a proper novel about life in the shelter"—he wrote in his insightful account.

> I could say our life was quite happy. The turmoil of lunch was followed by long talks. Then we prayed together. There was mass every day down in the cellar. It was so touchingly early Christian. Almost everybody felt they had to be good, so there were little to no conflicts, even though the whole situation was thoroughly unnerving. In the evenings, storytelling was followed by performances of Hungarian songs. […] Meanwhile, the shelling of the city continued, and even escalated. The streets grew empty and deserted because walking about was dangerous. Impacts, which were never-ending, could demolish a house or streetcorner. I ventured into the city on November 23rd. I was upset that time was going on, and we sat around waiting for the Russians to attack."[14]

According to Ugrin's recollections, the "mercurial" Nagy had difficulty with the enforced rest.[15] They eventually agreed that Ugrin would remain with the nuns until the Soviet troops arrived, and Nagy would get himself smuggled across the lines. With that settled, he left the bomb shelter to enlist acquaintances capable of assisting him in his plan.[16] He located

12 *Diary of Crossing the Front.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/47, 5.
13 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 6.
14 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 6.
15 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 193. According to Ugrin's comment, István Vida referred to Nagy as "mercurial" owing to his temperament.
16 He visited the Greek Catholic bishop Antal Papp to ask for a certificate stating that he was travelling on his behalf. *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 6–7, and *Identifications* OSZK Kt., f. 216/4. *Identification file* 1.

a willing guide in a few days near the Miskolc iron plant, who reported that he had crossed to the Soviet side on several occasions. Nagy prepared quickly so that he would not miss his chance.[17] He reassured those whom he had taken into his confidence, saying: "We shouldn't expect big results without big investments. Heroism and daring often contribute to success. Now I feel the two are connected."[18]

First, in priestly garb, he headed first to the iron plant, then to the epidemic hospital, as if to visit patients.[19] That was where he met his guide, later recording the accelerating events in narrative form in his diary:

> I walked to the iron plant with the package, fully equipped. I looked for bunker C.1. [...] There, the war's devastation was complete. Russians had been entrenched along the edge of the iron plant for days. Around 40 Soviet soldiers had attacked a huge building. About 26 of them had been captured or shot, while the rest were playing catch between buildings and machinery. What a deadly game of catch this is! [...] It's mortally dangerous to just step out the door. There's nobody in the streets. The Germans move their artillery from corner to corner, fire 20–25 times, then quickly shove off, because the Russian answer is bound to arrive with marvelous surety and precision. [...] After the artillery duel, I ran over to the neighboring building which was full of Hungarians and looked for their commander. I told him my plan. He was impressed that I was to undertake the spiritual care of orphaned Hungarians, which was what I told everyone, concealing my true intent. He didn't recommend his section of the front for two reasons: First the Germans could see it, from some 80–100 meters away, and the situation with the Russians had gotten critical. [...] [So] after lunch I left for the epidemic hospital with my package. It was Wednesday, November 29th. The hospital was on a small hill, away from the houses. This hill rose to the south, i.e. towards the Russians. [...] At its foot, when I stepped out from the last houses, two bullets whistled past me: the Russians had held the nearby lumberyard for a week, giving them a view of the road

17 After several attempts and some haggling, a young man named József Sándor helped him for 700 pengős. *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 13.

18 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 8.

19 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 193.

> and allowing them to keep it under fire. I wasn't prepared for this, and couldn't feel the gravity of the immediate danger. I stood surprised, and turned towards the shot; at that moment, a bullet whistled right past my face, and another hit the ground a few centimeters from me, splashing the mud. I jumped behind a house and crept on from there. I got to the other end of the epidemic hospital, and crouching in bomb craters, scurried to the fence. There, I crept through a hole, and quickly ran into the building. [...] Up until that time, I saw even the wildest bombing as some kind of shared or mutual danger, with the grenade that fell on our house a few days earlier not intended for me personally. But that day, someone with a gun targeted me, Fr Töhötöm Nagy, and wanted to shoot me like a dog, twice. It felt quite interesting. I knew I was still alive only because the person was a poor shot, the gun had misfired, or possibly he didn't even want to hit me because, as I learned later, they respected priests."[20]

Nagy and his guide had to wait for a calmer moment, which came on the next day, November 30th, at dawn, in order to cross. According to Nagy's account, they still wound up in the middle of a German-Soviet artillery duel: "Among the hellish explosions, I gave up the hope of making it out alive a thousand times. After one and a half hours, I was shaking all over, my nerves were a wreck."[21]

Eventually, and without further difficulties, they made it to a Soviet artillery observation post, which they entered with a makeshift white flag made from their shirts, shouting *magyarski tovarish*.[22] The Soviet soldiers searched them, took them into custody, and brought them to their commanding officer. "The captain established headquarters in a sand quarry, greeting us at the entrance. He smiled a wide smile, and so did I. We shook hands in a friendly and manly way. Eight or ten soldiers looked at us curiously, but amicably. They all wore thick boots, padded jackets [*telogreika* or *vatnik*: Red Army issue winter clothing], and fur hats which were too warm for the weather. The captain led us into the sand quarry, called for

20 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 9–12.
21 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 16.
22 *magyarski tovarish* (Rus) = Hungarian comrades

an interpreter, sat me down on a chair with the others grouped around me, and the introduction began."[23]

Thus began the series of negotiations between Töhötöm Nagy and Soviet military officers.

2.

As Nagy recalled, his crossing was followed by several weeks of "Soviet captivity," during which he was kept under surveillance,[24] and moved from camp to camp and headquarters to headquarters. First, this took place only around Miskolc and Görömbölytapolca;[25] however, he was soon being shuffled between the Soviet headquarters and barracks at Tiszaföldvár, Kunszentmárton, Szarvas, Szolnok, Jászberény, and Jászladány.[26] On each occasion, he had to inform his captors about who he was and what he wanted. He was never hurt or mistreated, which he made a point of noting explicitly.[27] When interrogated, he asked his counterparts several times to spare the Szatmár monastery of the Daughters of Charity whenever the Red Army reached Miskolc. One interrogator "was kind enough to write down the exact address of the sisters and asked me to write a few words of greeting in his notebook for the Mother Superior. A little romance in a bloody war, he said." He jotted down a message to the sisters, mentioning Ugrin, the comrade whom he had left behind.[28]

Nagy colorfully revisited this period later; however, the accuracy of his recollections is disputable. Concerning the Red Army, he remarked:

> [b]y morning I was bitten polka-dot red by lice, fleas and bedbugs, and one morning I picked and killed more than 70 (seventy) bedbugs from my sheepskin vest. I could recount that there was a general, who, to save me from boredom, sent a captain to me. He was lecturer of the history of literature at Kyiv University, and we discussed literature for a whole afternoon in the bowels of a peasant house while shells

23 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 17.
24 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 149.
25 Today, Görömbölytapolca is known as Miskolctapolca.
26 *Notebook entry* [Debrecen] January 9, 1945. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944. – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.
27 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 23.
28 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 20.

> exploded around us. Those first days, they treated me in various ways. After the literary discussion, a brutal colonel, maybe to try to break me, dispatched me to be executed. They stood me up against a wall, two soldiers took aim, and I felt that I was facing death. They wanted to blindfold me, but I said it wasn't necessary, I wouldn't let them. And as I was staring at the barrels of the two machine guns, I was instantly drenched with sweat, as if I had been caught in a rain shower, and a deep, silent sadness came over me. I felt that I was to die here, among dead horses. When they walked me back to the house, all of my clothes stuck wet and clammy to my body, and I thought I'd die of thirst."[29]

In his diary, Nagy describes only a single scene which bears some similarity to the above, albeit recounted with far less detail and drama:

> [the] captain went in front silently, the guard behind me. We reached a place that looked like a horse cemetery. There were dead horses piled on top of each other, a few ditches like graves dug in a row, and it was all enclosed by a stream on one side and a stick fence on the other. As we entered, I could see no way out except back the way we had come. Why on earth had we come here? Why are we going to the far end? It then struck me that they wanted to shoot me! Surveying the whole situation, it seemed so certain, that a hot sweat poured over my entire body, and I felt anxious. I was to die like this in a horse cemetery! Still, I was to die for God's cause.[30]

In a nearly-contemporary description, the tension dissipates, and the situation is happily resolved: "I glanced back at the guard. He met me with a blank expression. Meanwhile the captain reached the stick fence, pried the branches apart, and walked through the gap! I was relieved to realize, we had simply used a shortcut."[31]

Ugrin later disputed the accuracy of Nagy's mock execution, since the latter failed to mention it to him when they reunited: "He could have read

29 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 158, and Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 117.
30 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 25.
31 *Diary of Crossing the Front*, 25.

it in a Victor Hugo novel and written it down because it fit into his narrative. How do I know? We discussed every second of this period several times. I'm not saying it was all fun and games, and I certainly wouldn't want to have the experience he had, but you shouldn't overdramatize things either."[32] Other possible embellishments in Nagy's narrative—as in the case of KALOT—were criticized by Ugrin on several other counts as well.

More than just a reaction to the traumatic experience, Ugrin deemed Nagy's recollections to be misinformation, of dubious authenticity, and overemphasizing his own role. One explanation for this could be the rivalry between the two men, which, although only latent at this juncture, would later grow in intensity. KALOT's founder (Ugrin) and its deputy president (Nagy) certainly would clash with one another down the road; however, Ugrin had other reasons to begrudge Nagy his experiences in Soviet captivity.

The Transylvanian Jesuit had told his very first negotiating partner that he was searching for Colonel-General János Vörös[33] who had defected to the Soviets. Nagy was to be "his collaborator"[34] since he (Nagy) represented the Christian Democratic People's Party, which was then taking part in the antifascist resistance. He showed his identification documents and spoke about KALOT.

> [...] I had to reveal the program of the Christian Democratic People's Party. How we aimed to help the people, and what we had done already. Actually, I introduced KALOT to them. He said this was all very well, but it was just patching up, we had to build a whole new world if we wanted the people to be happy, which could not be accomplished without a revolution. In his view, Hungary wasn't ready for this revolution, so they weren't going to interfere with our political affairs. I said that we wanted to build a new world as well, to which he replied *'that's just*

32 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 200.

33 János Vörös (1891–1968) was a Colonel-General, who defected to the Red Army in October 1944 in the aftermath of the Arrow Cross coup d'état. He subsequently served as Defense minister of the Provisional National Cabinet between 22 December 1944 and 15 November 1945. As a member of the Provisional National Cabinet's delegation to Moscow, he signed the armistice agreement. Nagy consistently (incorrectly) refers to him as János Veres in his diary.

34 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 24.

what we think we want.' Materialism and bolshevism are the new world, which come from the east."[35]

Over the course of these conversations, it dawned on Nagy that he should present the still-nascent Christian Democratic Party as a significant upcoming political force. Thus, depending on the situation he found himself in, he improvised, shifting emphasis from KALOT's work to introducing the new Catholic political party and expounding upon its program. The only issue was that Ugrin had understood this to be his task, and Kerkai had warned both of them about discussing political issues prior to their departure.[36] For his part, Nagy clearly thought that, since he was the only one to cross the frontlines, he should spare no effort in establishing himself and his credentials among his Soviet negotiating partners by offering as much relevant information as was feasible. In this way, he hoped to achieve his goal—namely, permission for KALOT to continue operating even during the impending Soviet occupation.

The risks this posed should not be underestimated, particularly as Nagy refrained from revealing his identity for some time. Instead, he referred to himself as "professor" or Sándor Nagy (an easier name for a Russian speaker to understand) and claimed to be a Szeged university lecturer. During his negotiations, he grew aware that both he and the information he supplied were being checked. Several days after his arrival in Soviet custody, his hosts decided to relocate him from Görömbölytapolca to Tiszaföldvár, the frontline military police base, where—he was told—Marshal Malinovsky, commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, was also quartered.[37] Nagy met Malinovsky on December 3, 1944 at a peasant house on a farm between Tiszaföldvár and Jászapáti. He felt that he was getting lost among the details of his multiple interrogations and cross-examinations by different interrogating officers.[38] Ultimately, he was transferred to Tiszaföldvár, where Nagy finally found trustworthy negotiating partners to

35 *Diary of Crossing the Front*, 24.

36 See the motto of this chapter.

37 R. Y. Malinovsky (1898–1967) was a marshal of the Soviet Union, and one of the best-known Soviet commanders of World War II. After the war, he served as minister of defense between 1957 and 1967.

38 *Notebook entry* [Tiszaföldvár] 3 December 1944. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944. – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11. and *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 28.

whom he could reveal his true identity and goals.[39] He described a pleasant discourse with an educated first lieutenant:

> I felt his words to be so honest that I proceeded to shed light on the real situation. I explained to him why I hadn't told him everything. But now, here are all my certificates. I started with my certificate of baptism which gives my name as Töhötöm Sándor. I went on to produce my secular and spiritual photo identifications, filled out, respectively, to Sándor and Töhötöm. I then told him how I had gone into hiding in Budapest as a civilian using the name Sándor. He had a good laugh at the clever identifications.[40]

Nagy could not have known at the time, but Ugrin had, in the interim, been retrieved from the Szatmár monastery and also brought to Tiszaföldvár, based on the address Nagy had provided. Ugrin was also being interrogated, but using less friendly methods, since, as his interrogators noted, someone speaking on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party had already given the same information. Ugrin recounted: "A patrol sent by the Russians came to the monastery early in the morning to get me, based on the information Fr Töhötöm Nagy had provided. [...] So the patrol came, and barely let me put on my clothes, just commanding me with 'Davai, davai...[Russian: 'Move it!']"[41]

Here, one of the reasons why Ugrin resented Nagy becomes clear. This was only exacerbated by the reception he received from his interrogators:

> Töhötöm wouldn't have been true to himself if he had abided by what we had agreed upon. He wanted to act as a diplomat, and, yes, as a politician. Why?... Who knows. That just is how he is! When he hero-

39 He believed that he was at Marshal Malinovsky's headquarters. *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 26–28.

40 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/47, 29–30.

41 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 194. The monastery and the Girls' High School suffered a direct artillery hit during the battle. After the front had shifted further to the west, the latter played host to a Soviet field hospital. The building, and its contents were heavily damaged. Alajos Bury, *A Szatmári Irgalmas Nővérek vezetése alatt álló miskolci Érseki Róm. Kat. Nőnevelő Intézet Polgári Leányiskolájának Évkönyve az 1944–45. iskolai évről* [Yearbook of the Girls' High School of the Miskolc Archiepiscopal Roman Catholic Boarding School for Girls for the 1944/45 Schoolyear]. Miskolc, [no publisher] 1945, 1–2.

> ically crossed the front—which was a great deed, especially if everything is as he described it—like I said, as soon as he crossed, he started to lie, for no reason, that he had been sent on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party. [...] Of course, the NKVD double-checked everything at once. First with me, who, even though Töhötöm didn't know, was being interrogated by the military police, perhaps even in the next room, on the relationship between the party and KALOT, our identities, and our real mission. I couldn't have known that Töhi was running his mouth, but did feel the tightening of an invisible noose around my neck many times. I know now: because of the contradictions...! [...] I trembled: how close I was to Siberia![42]

At the same time, Nagy felt that his cooperation had opened doors. So, when a pleasant Soviet first lieutenant who spoke multiple languages brought him a pen and paper the next day and asked him to write down everything that he had earlier said, he happily completed 30 pages. "I poured my heart out in presenting KALOT's work and its organization. When he took it, he said he was going to translate it into Russian and present it to Marshal Malinovsky. He came with another piece of paper the next day and asked me on behalf of the general to write a description of all Hungarian parties, their movements, and every organization and association in general. I worked on this for half a night and a whole day."[43]

Even though prisoners filtered through his cell, and his freedoms and movement were restricted, Nagy fully immersed himself in preparing this summary on December 5th and 6th. Despite his enthusiasm when speaking with uniformed members of the Russian intelligentsia, he does not appear to have ever given second thought to the notion that they might be informants for or even officers of the NKVD. He never complained about physical fatigue or the lack of sustenance; however, hygiene (lice, bedbugs, and sanitary difficulties), inevitable inconveniences due to overcrowding (three people sleeping in one bed), and most of all, the inability to celebrate mass (due to lack of altar wine of any quality) caused him

42 József Ugrin, *Reply... Op. cit.* In *Bequest of Ugrin,* 41–42. (Underlined in the original.)
43 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 30.

great anguish. Undeterred, he felt that his goal outweighed the difficulties he faced, systematically preparing an overview for his custodians.

> [T]here were four separate groups:
> 1. Fascist parties (that's how they call the Arrow Cross Party) and related movements,
> 2. Parties of new Hungary and their organizations,
> 3. Movements which might easily become parties, and finally 4. Non-affiliated associations. I am not going to describe the outline in detail here, let alone its characterizations, because it wouldn't be good if certain people found out what I wrote about each of them. [...] Among the fascists, I wrote separately about Szálasi's group and the Imrédyists. I listed their leaders, the ignominious role of the officer corps in the Arrow Cross Party, public sentiment, the Brotherhood of Eastern Front Veterans, etc. [...] I listed certain members of the coalition among the parties of new Hungary. I mentioned Györffy College among the communists, along with the strange performance of Mrs Zsindely[44], and more radical figures among the populist writers. On the communists I wrote that a majority of them were Arrow Cross Party members. [...] In discussing the Smallholders' Party, I listed and described Tibor Eckhardt,[45] Béla Varga, [Zoltán] Tildy, and the Peasant Association with Ferenc Nagy and Vince Vörös.[46] [...] Group 3 were the legitimists. [...] Then came the past masters of the old liberal order (Count István Bethlen, Miklós Kállay, István Antal,[47] etc.) [...] Finally I mentioned the National Liberal Party with Rassai.[48] I wrote that nobody had heard anything from them for years, and if they got to play a part now, it would be because the Hungarians think they're appeasing the Soviets. For this is the party that Count Mihály Károlyi used to be a member

44 Klára Tüdős, Mrs Zsindely (1895–1980) was a costume designer, ethnographer, and president of the National Calvinist Womens' Association from 1944. For her biography, see Szekér, "Egy élet."

45 Tibor Eckhardt (1888–1972) was a Smallholders' Party MP. On his life see Katalin Kádár Lynn, *Eckhardt Tibor amerikai évei*.

46 Vince Vörös (1911–2001) was a Smallholders' Party MP.

47 István Antal (1896–1975) was prime minister Gyula Gömbös's press officer and following various ministerial mandates, became minister of justice in the Sztójay cabinet.

48 Károly Rassay (1886–1958), was a journalist, lawyer, and liberal politician.

> of. Group 4 were the associations with no party affiliation. I went from boy scouts to KIE[49] and KIOE[50] to the Mary Congregation and A[ctio]. C[atholica]. to list every important association. [...] Finally, I was asked to write a clause about whom I would like to see as political leaders and why. I listed 10–12 names with brief justifications. This large survey was the main result of our mission.[51]

Information on the politicians, movements and parties Nagy listed seems to reveal the survival of some portions of the diary's text. The contemporary telegram style notebook entries mostly discuss daily matters, without revealing much about the actual content of the report. Although there are no extant sources to check what exactly Nagy had or had no included in his report, one thing is certain: the Soviets dallied in responding for so long that Nagy contemplated going on a hunger strike. At least in part, this was motivated by the unfortunate circumstances he found himself in.[52]

Ultimately, he was allowed to aid the Soviets in writing three pamphlets, to be distributed under his name: one for Hungarian soldiers, another for the general populace, and a third for the soldiers again, but this time with a festive content, since Christmas was approaching.[53] In return, he would be assisted in getting to Debrecen, and reunited with Ugrin, who was staying in the building next door.[54]

It is unclear whether Nagy drafted the pamphlets. On December 27th, following, what he described as the saddest Christmas of his life, he and Ugrin were released. After that, they strode, accompanied by military escort, along the snow-swept roads of the Great Hungarian Plain, hitching rides from passing cars and trucks. From Jászapáti, they were accom-

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49 KIE – Christian Youth Association (1883–1950).

50 KIOE – National Catholic Industrial and Working Youth Association, later National Christian Youth Association (1923–1946).

51 *Diary of Crossing the Front*, 30–32.

52 *Notebook entry* [Tiszaföldvár] December 17, 1944. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944 – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

53 *Diary of Crossing the Front,* 34. and *Notebook entry* [Tiszaföldvár] December 19, 1944. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944 – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

54 *Notebook entry* [Tiszaföldvár] December 15, 1944. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944 – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11, and Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 194.

panied by András Tömpe,[55] a "partisan captain" in "Russian garb" and Sándor Nógrádi[56], the "partisan colonel" [57]—before arriving at Debrecen.

Ugrin wrote: "[W]e could see Töhi talking with two people in the corner of the room. They had white fur caps and a sort of military mantle. They were talking about which partisan group in which towns... names, town names kept flying, the younger one diligently taking notes. We learned later that the older one in the white fur cap was Sándor Nógrádi, a truly bold partisan... I'm not writing down the name of the younger one. He became a big man..." Ugrin did not include Tömpe's name owing to historical circumstances, however, the later communist state security leader, who briefly enjoyed a large amount of power after 1945, was named by Nagy.[58]

After their arduous and circuitous trek across the Great Hungarian Plain, Nagy and Ugrin arrived in Debrecen on January 9, 1945.[59] For their part, Kerkai and Meggyesi had made it to the temporary capital by Christmas. Ultimately, both teams of KALOT leaders had successfully crossed the front. The next chapter of KALOT's struggle for survival was about to begin.

3.

The mission KALOT's leaders had undertaken eventually bore fruit: both the Soviet military command and the Provisional National Cabinet allowed the organization to continue operating. Nagy commented: "They gave permission for KALOT to continue operating. In fact, I'm getting a Russian paper which states that I am under the protection of the top Russian military command and may use any Russian military vehicle during my travels. [...] I got the paper in Debrecen, and recognized its

55 András Tömpe (1913–1971) was head of the Political Investigation Department of the Ministry of Interior between January and May 1945, before leading the Hungarian State Police's Rural Headquarters' Political Law Enforcement Department between May 1945 and 1 September 1946. On his life, see Krahulcsán, *Pártállambiztonság*, 167–88. and Baczoni, "Pár(t)viadal," 79–110.

56 Sándor Nógrádi (1894–1971) was a communist politician, soldier, and diplomat.

57 *Notebook entry* [Jászapáti] January 7, 1945. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944 – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

58 *Notebook entry* [Jászapáti] January 7, 1945. *Pocket calendars.* 2 November 1944 – 3 February 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11, and Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 196.

59 For those unfamiliar with Hungarian geography, travelling from Budapest to Debrecen by car takes approximately 2 hours nowadays. Nagy and Ugrin needed 13 days to make this trip.

value when it allowed me to traverse the country with the speed of a military courier…"[60]

The Soviets housed them at the Aranybika Hotel in Debrecen,[61] where Nagy was able to obtain "identification in Russian with a red, triangular stamp" from the city's commander.[62] Over the coming weeks, he and Ugrin traversed the Tisza and Miskolc, areas which had been relieved of frontline pressure. There, they documented KALOT's personal and material losses, encouraging their adherents to renew their efforts. They were confronted by the reality of the war's destruction, which had disrupted KALOT's activities.

On January 26, 1945, the two met Kerkai, who was departing for Budapest, which was still under siege, in Debrecen once again.[63] Arriving at the capital, they found more of the same: KALOT's headquarters had been hit in December, with personnel losses ascertained only once the fighting subsided. For the time being, KALOT's circular, which welcomed the Red Army, was published in Szeged.[64] By February 1, 1945, the circular for local KALOT organizations, entitled *KALOT enters its second decade* began to be published in Debrecen. It included a public statement from the movement's leadership, which included suggestions as to the best methods for returning to normalcy.[65] This made KALOT one of the first organizations to resume operations, owing, in no small part, to the legitimacy bestowed upon it by the occupational and provisional authorities, as well as its leadership, which had successfully crossed the front.

The circular, published officially under Ugrin's name, encouraged KALOT's members and leadership to resume their efforts.

> We have received the newest and honored manifestation of appreciation in the present days of our ordeal, when important commands were issued to two leaders of our movement by the Minister of the Interior

60 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 165.
61 *Notebook entry* [Debrecen] January 11, 1945. *Pocket calendars.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11, and Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 203.
62 Ugrin, *Második évtizedbe indul*, 203–4.
63 *Notebook entry* [Debrecen] January 23–26, 1945. *Pocket calendars.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.
64 Balogh, *A KALOT*, 163.
65 Ugrin, *Második évtizedbe indul*. The work included the Christian Democratic Party's program, which was also published separately: Balogh and Izsák, *Pártok és pártprogramok*, 165–67.

> of the Provisional National Government, Dr. Ferenc Erdei. He stated factually while negotiating with two of our leaders on December 28th, 1944 that: "We know you're the leaders of Hungary's largest peasant youth movement' and wished us success for further work. We never doubted that 'there is nothing to stop KALOT from continuing its operation undisturbed in every village. There is no reason to ask for a permit either from Russian, or from Hungarian authorities."[66]

The circular went on to describe the work KALOT's leaders had performed during the war, including their participation in the Hungarian Front, and anti-Arrow Cross and anti-Nazi activities. KALOT's members could draw strength from the descriptions given by those who had crossed the frontlines. "[KALOT's] two main leaders were sent across the front to patriots in liberated areas to help pave the way for the new Hungary. Naturally, the Nazis and their henchmen searched high and low for them. Several colleagues were captured, however, two of our top leaders managed to cross the battle lines under fire."[67]

After setting an example, the movement's leadership coined a new slogan: "Onwards on our old path in the new decade: in a social, more democratic, and independent Hungary for a peasantry rooted in Christ, that's more educated and wealthier!"[68]

Despite such encouraging words and the leadership standing its ground, KALOT's position remained critical, even in light of the difficulties confronting Hungary and the Catholic Church. The dramatic political and ecclesiastical situation(s), as well as the depletion of KALOT's financial reserves, called for bolder steps.

66 Ugrin, *Második évtizedbe indul*, 1.
67 Ugrin, *Második évtizedbe indul*, 2.
68 Ugrin, *Második évtizedbe indul*, 3.

Töhötöm Nagy as “Emilio Faber”, a deported Jew

IV.

"Rome! My One Earthly Love!"[1]

"I had time to think during the long journey: I assessed how little I cared about anything in fact, except for the struggle of God's kingdom on Earth, the Church."[2]

"I still have almost all of my fake identification cards either procured or made myself; from Finnish professor to bearded Orthodox, I've had many disguises, only my heart has remained forever that of a Jesuit, and all my hardships appeared joyful, for I felt I was practicing the essence of my Jesuit life when I served His Holiness and the Church unconditionally."[3]

1.

In early April 1945, Nagy and Kerkai reached the conclusion that, in order for KALOT to continue, given the new circumstances, Nagy should resume negotiations with higher authorities in Rome. It was hoped that he could also use such an opportunity to raise funds for the movement, possibly by traveling to America. So began Nagy's period as a clandestine courier, envoy, and emissary to the Eternal City.

The "bold and resourceful man, able to overcome every hardship he faces during such a mission"[4] set out on his first journey to Rome on April

1 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] October 11, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 5. fol.
2 *Diary excerpt* [Berchtesgaden] October 9, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 5. fol.
3 Töhötöm Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 178.
4 March 7, 1946; *JZX-6412; The Professor Plan: AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] Itinerary and Contacts.* National Archives and Records Administration (henceforth NARA) II, Record Group 226, Entry 210, Box 505, Withdrawal Number 18470-18481. (Thanks to Duncan Bare for assisting me with this group of sources.)

9, 1945, heading east (towards Romania) because of the fighting. Ultimately, he returned to Budapest shortly thereafter, approaching Italy from the west, through Austria.[5]

"I had a real, authentic identification," he wrote, "which stated in five languages that I am a Florentine Jew named Emilio Faber,[6] heading back to his family having escaped from German concentration camps. The identification didn't cost me anything, and it was genuine, as it was given to me by the Jews themselves whom I had previously rescued from deportation with various identification cards."[7] He later remarked to his diary: "Despite my excellent identification, I chose to illegally cross the frontier, because I was afraid of more serious controls, which were always risky."[8]

Nagy's journey was indeed hazardous: Austria, like Germany, was divided into four occupation zones at the end of World War II, making it an increasingly active field for each power's intelligence and security agencies, to say nothing of those of other states, whose interests were becoming more and more conflicted.[9] At the same time, it functioned as a converging point for hundreds of thousands of people escaping one or another system or regime. Although most of the refugees were civilians who had met with unfortunate fates, there were many Nazi and Axis sympathizers, collaborators, and war criminals among them as well.[10] Their company during the journey, along with the conflicts and intentions they brought with them, did not promise safety and support for a 37-year-old man—Töhötöm Nagy, disguised as a civilian—who traveled alone towards a destination that was unknown to them, without a support network or a well-trodden route. According to Nagy's contemporary hand-written report on his first journey to Rome, he was stopped in the British occupation zone near Voitsberg, Styria and taken to a camp, from which he managed to escape at night towards Sankt Andrä in neighboring Carinthia.[11] Even if

5 *My journeys. Journey I.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.
6 His identification was for Emilio Faber, *Identifications,* OSZK Kt., f. 216/3.
7 At this point, we cannot rely on what Nagy's account found in *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek.* Among the notes and diaries, he used as primary sources for the book, a May 1945 entry states that he bought the false identification papers made up in the name of Emilio Faber for 250,000 lei from a stranger in Bucharest. *My journeys. Journey I.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.
8 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 89.
9 On the issue see Bacher, "A *Vörös rém.*"
10 Bare, "Angleton's Hungarians."
11 *My journeys. Journey I.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.

he lacked an explicit support network, and any sort of diplomatic means or protection, he could rely on help from clergymen anywhere there was a Catholic parish to be found: Austrian and North Italian Jesuit centers and Benedictine monasteries offered him lodging, while the Archbishop of Udine provided him with rest, food, new, allegedly official, documents,[12] and safe conduct for a brief stretch. Thus, after many detours and much trouble, he safely arrived on July 12, 1945—as he wrote—"[a]top an old truck after midnight [...] to the Eternal City."[13]

Since he was one of the first Hungarians to arrive in Rome after the end of the European war, the information he brought naturally increased his prominence. Because little was known of the situation in Hungary, his audiences hung on every word:

> My arrival caused a certain sensation in Rome at the Curia, as I was the first to come from a Russian occupied region after the war, and I brought reputable, authentic news. In the Jesuit center, I found Fr Norberto de Boynes[14] Vicar General, because after the death of Fr Ledóchowski[15] the *Congregatio generalis* could not be convoked, meaning that the order didn't have a Father General. P. de Boynes is an extremely broad-minded French Jesuit who had traversed America and Asia as visitator [an official visitor or examiner representing the Roman Catholic Church], and of course, knew Europe extraordinarily well, with all its problems. He called upon me the day I arrived, and after our long conversation asked me to file my report in writing on the ecclesiastical and political situation in Hungary as soon as possible. It was an easy promise to fulfill, for I had brought just such a report along.[16]

12 *Identification of Giuseppe Nogara, Archbishop of Udine,* Udine, July 7, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/4. *Identification file* 6.

13 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 89.

14 Norbert de Boynes (1870–1954) was a French Jesuit, Assistant General, and Vicar General between 1945–1946 until the election of Fr Janssens.

15 Włodzimierz Ledóchowski (1868–1942) was an Austrian Jesuit of Polish descent, who served as Superior General of the Jesuit Order between 1915 and 1942. (The terms Superior General and Father General both refer to the same position and are used interchangeably in English.)

16 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 177–78.

Nagy's first report detailed the period up to June 14, 1945. Although subsequently translated into French[17] it was based on a Hungarian draft he had recorded in his diary.[18] In this account, Nagy describes the wartime damage suffered by Hungary in detail, along with the material and moral destruction unleashed by Soviet troops, and the difficulties of returning to normalcy. He dedicated an entire chapter to the Hungarian Catholic Church's losses and the behavior of the Red Army towards churches. When assessing the domestic situation, he noted the communist party's growing role and its attempts to consolidate power, offering a gloomy outlook with regard to the country's potential annexation by the Soviet Union, as well as the likelihood of a new, anti-Soviet world war. In discussing Catholic associations, his comments speak emphatically about KALOT. With an eye to the future, key steps would include keeping the Vatican abreast of the situation in Hungary, appointing a new Prince Primate, and securing financial support.

Nagy's report was such a sensation that, after delivering it, he was questioned by Mons. Silvio Sericano, the diplomat standing in for Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI, the Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, who was on vacation at the time.[19] Mons. Sericano desired to know more about the vacant seats in different bishoprics. In the following days, Nagy drew up a memorandum at Mons. Sericano's request listing, among others, those suitable for filling the vacant position of Prince Primate, Archbishop of Esztergom.[20]

As a result, Nagy figured prominently in the Holy See's decision-making process as to the appointment of the next Archbishop of Esztergom, and had every right to feel that his information had truly helped shape

17 *Notes sur la situation actuelle de la Hongrie et des mouvements catholiques en Hongrie. (Jusqu'au 14 juin 1945) [Report on the current situation in Hungary and its Catholic movements (until 14 June 1945)].* Rome, le 14 juillet 1945. Copies from the materials of the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten French document. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Singulorum, 1913–1949/1942–1945. and Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati (henceforth: ASRS), AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124, ff. 237–250.

18 *Report on the current situation in Hungary and its Catholic movements.* [Rome] 18–19 July 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 5. fol.

19 Nagy spoke with a substitute's substitute in the State Secretariat led by a cardinal.

20 *De provisione ecclesiarum Hungariae* [On the Provision of Hungarian Churches]. Roma, die 7 august. 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50.

Pope Pius XII's ultimate decision.[21] In his memo, Nagy put the Bishop of Veszprém, Mindszenty, in first place, followed by the Debrecen provost, László Bánáss, with the Bishop of Székesfehérvár, Lajos Shvoy, in third, among others.[22] He discussed the candidates in detail, his characterization of Mindszenty being of particularly interest. In arguing for and against the man who would ultimately become the next Hungarian Prince Primate, it is impossible not to draw parallels with several elements of the characterization Nagy and Kerkai provided, at the request of Nuncio Angelo Rotta, concerning the Hungarian situation immediately following his expulsion:[23]

> Arguments for:
> 1. He is a consistent, firm man, unafraid of any difficulty.
> Over the years he has helped organize in several counties to openly demand changes to the law on civil marriage. He has condemned the unfair measures of civil authorities. When a minister reproached him for this, although then only a parish priest, appealing to his own power, he replied: Your power is greater, but mine lasts longer.
> As dean, he consecrated 18 parishes in 20 years, and opened more than 12 Catholic schools. As Bishop of Veszprém, he founded 16 new parishes in his first year. The plans were ready in detail by the second year, but then the Russians came, and everything stopped.
> 2. He has an extraordinary talent for organizing.

21 Jenő Gergely states "[T]he number of those 'midwiving' Mindszenty's appointment has risen continually over time; the truth remains a Vatican secret. [...] [József] Cavallier also drew the outgoing nuncio's attention to Mindszenty. [...] We find the common opinion acceptable, that nuncio Rotta played the largest part in appointing Mindszenty, as he had when elevated to Bishop of Veszprém." Gergely J., "Magyar–szentszéki diplomáciai kapcsolatok," 79–80.

22 He offered characterizations of 16 Hungarian clerics, suggesting them for various vacant positions.

23 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 5 April 1945. "József Mindszenty, bishop of Veszprém. He is characterized by strong judgment and extraordinary willpower. He thinks in broad perspectives and is a true creative individual. (Has founded 20 new parishes in a short year.) He heeds good advice. He considers every aspect in planning, but sometimes lacks tact in implementation. His liabilities are having been a proponent for the annexation of Vend county from Croatia, and his continued loyalty to the Habsburgs. These are offset by the fact that he was deported by the National Socialists." OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 4. fol.

As parish priest in Zalaegerszeg, he gave an example of grouping every social stratum of the city into separate Catholic organizations.
3. He has social spirit.
He worked hard for several years to help the poor Gypsies [sic]. A few weeks after becoming bishop, he raised the wages of the church estate's day laborers, who had previously been living in true misery.
4. He leads an exemplary life as a priest.
Coming from a poor family, when he became bishop, he distributed all his private wealth among his relatives, with the caveat that they were not to expect any further financial help from him. Not even his staunchest enemies could ever accuse him of moral flaws. I myself have seen him many times praying alone in church, for long stretches. He is quick to learn and is not closed-minded.
5. He is an educated man.
He has written many books: apart from historical studies of lesser importance, he has penned a three-volume, monumental work of piety on the duties of Christian mothers.
6. The communists also hold him in high regard since he was forcefully deported by the Nazis.

Arguments against:
1. He is too harsh (strict).
He made the priests and divinity teachers working in the city live communally in the extended parish building, and kept such strict discipline, that the parish was named 'Pehminary' (his surname was still Pehm at that time).
2. He is prone to tell the truth too harshly, which occurs so often that it's unnecessary to cite examples. Many respect him but don't like him for this.
3. His willpower is too great.
Anything he believes to be true, he realizes without mercy. He fired and thus ruined the political career of a county deputy lieutenant who opposed his struggle against civil marriage.
4. He advocated the annexation of the Vend region to Hungary, which is now part of Yugoslavia.
5. He is a known royalist.

> The portrait of Otto Habsburg, heir to the throne, hangs in his room; he has celebrated a solemn funeral mass every year on the anniversary of the death of Charles IV, the last king of Hungary.
> 6. More recently, the communists have been up in arms against him, because they wanted to use his authority for their own benefit, and he has thwarted their intentions.
> Final conclusion: József Mindszenty shows a mixture of all the virtues and flaws of great and excellent men.[24]

Pope Pius XII[25] received Nagy on August 14th for a private audience and asked him about his report and memorandum.[26] Two days later, after receiving several other pieces of information in largely the same tone, the Pope decided to appoint József Mindszenty Archbishop of Esztergom. From then on, Nagy would act as a courier, not only for the Jesuits, but also the Vatican. As he recalled, he was immediately informed of the decision concerning Mindszenty, and entrusted with bringing his letter of appointment to Hungary. Fr Leiber, the Pope's private secretary,[27] also gave him money that was intended for KALOT on his superior's behalf. The sum was so considerable that, as Nagy later wrote: "[from this] we could sustain the entire KALOT movement with its staff, publications, and outreach for at least a year. [...] I secured the letter and the money in the lining of my small suitcase that very day, and looked for a way to leave, preferably at once."[28]

As Nagy recalls, he and Fr Leiber also broached the subject of reaching a *modus vivendi* with the Soviets on this occasion.[29] Nagy was surprised to learn from Leiber that "[the] Holy Father is very much influenced by pro-Soviets. There are many priests here [...] who don't see the Soviets as a threat to the Church."[30] Among the variety of opinions he heard in Rome

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24 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 181–83. The arguments for and against Mindszenty originally formed part of Nagy's Latin memorandum of August 7, 1945. *De provisione ecclesiarum Hungariae [On the Provision of Hungarian Churches].* Roma, die 7 august. 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50. 2–3.

25 On Pius XII and the beginnings of the postwar Ostpolitik see: Ickx, "L'Ostpolitik... Diplomazia."

26 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 184–85.

27 Robert Leiber SJ (1887–1967), was a German Jesuit and Pius XII's private secretary.

28 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 185.

29 Ickx, Keresztes and Somorjai, *Ütközni*, and Chamedes, *A Twentieth Century Crusade*, 207–23.

30 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 8 August 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/9.

concerning the international situation and the role of the Soviet Union, this nugget of information, interestingly enough, confirmed his own experiences, providing a strong impulse for Nagy's subsequent attempts at mediation.[31]

Two recorded versions of Nagy's return journey from Rome exist. In several details, these are identical; however, at certain junctures, they differ markedly. According to the first, he left for Hungary on or around August 20th, reaching Udine with the aid of certificates received from the Jesuits. There, he joined a Polish military mission, which took him to Villach, Austria, before continuing to Mogersdorf near the Austrian-Hungarian border, after passing through Graz. He then swam across the Rába river, and made landfall some 3 km outside of Rábatótfalu, now part of Szentgotthárd. From there, he took a train to Budapest (via Szombathely), which he reached on September 3.[32] Nagy had very good reason to hold to this version of his trek once back in Hungary, since those who had actually helped him along the way (his instinct told him) operated in the secret world.

The Vatican was not the only institution to benefit from Nagy's information concerning Soviet-occupied Hungary, as there were many others keen to learn about the political, economic, and domestic situation of Central and Eastern Europe.[33] Although Nagy's diaries are incomplete, from at least August 1945 he was in contact with the (then stateless, formerly Hungarian) Catholic political commentator Zsolt Aradi. More than a year earlier, in June of 1944, Aradi had begun working with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS),[34] a US intelligence agency, and in August 1945, organized Nagy into the "Klein Project" following a meeting between the two men in Graz.[35] From this point on, Nagy would become an intelligence

31 Ickx, "L'Ostpolitik… Il 'modus vivendi'."
32 *My journeys. Journey I.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.
33 Bare, "Angleton's Hungarians."
34 Zsolt Aradi (1908–1963) was a Catholic writer, journalist, and editor. One of the editors of the reform Catholic *Korunk Szava* between 1931 and 1935, he was also the founding editor of *Vigilia (Vigil)* in 1935. He served as Press attaché in Rome, at the Hungarian Embassy of the Vatican, under baron Gábor Apor, Hungarian ambassador to the Holy See. Aradi died in New York.
35 Perhaps a play on his name, Nagy (large, in Hungarian) was given the codename Klein (small, in German). When he first reunited with Aradi in August 1945, he was to be expected under the name "Alessandro Nagy." OSS Austria's Secret Intelligence (SI) "Klein

source for both the Austrian and Italian branches of OSS and its successor, the Strategic Services Unit (or SSU).[36]

OSS's "X-2 Balkans" section, then in Rome, summarizes its first encounter with Nagy with the following: "In mid-August 1945 Töhötöm Nagy, a Jesuit, arrived in Rome from Hungary bearing a memo to the Vatican on conditions in Hungary as of February 1945. A cabled request was received by X-2 Balkans from SI Salzburg to intercept and ascertain the contents of the memo. This was accomplished[...]"[37] Although only briefly, Nagy met several Hungarians in Rome who were also working with the organization, as well as a few of its American personnel.[38] Most central among the latter group was Stephen Streeter, born in Czechoslovakia, of partial ethnic Hungarian parentage. In addition to English and Hungarian, Streeter spoke many Central European languages, and cultivated contacts with his network of "Balkan" informants and sources using the code name "Signor Stephano"[39] Streeter "traced AE752 [Nagy], contacted him personally and obtained copies of the reports submitted to the Pope on political conditions and Catholic resistance. AE5 [Streeter] gained AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] confidence and recruited him to obtain information on AE-land [Hungary], chiefly on the existence of resistance movements."[40]

In this way, Nagy submitted his first report to the OSS along with the memorandum intended for the Pope discussing candidates for the position of Prince Primate.[41] Nagy was far from the only Hungarian clerical

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Project" developed into SSU Austria's "14th Street Macy Project," with Nagy given the codename "Irving Smith" (sometimes "Irwing"). In Italy, where he was assigned the designation AE752 as part of the JA-Network, he was operationally known as "Professor" or part of the "Professor Plan."

36 Bare, "The curious case," 111–26.

37 August 27, 1945; *JBX-194; Organization of KALOT*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 174, B 129, F 978.

38 His first meeting was attended by AE5 and AH26.These were Stephen Streeter (see below) and Sylvia Press, respectively.

39 "Signor Stephano" = 'Stephen' Streeter, born Elemér Strasser (1906–?), the code name for an American intelligence officer born in present day northern Slovakia. Streeter studied law in Prague, later psychology in Bratislava, served as a lieutenant in the Czechoslovak Army and emigrated to the US in 1940, joining OSS in 1943. *Stephen Streeter Personal File,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 224, B 752.

40 March 1, 1946; *JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] Preliminary Report,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

41 English translation of parts of the report, the memorandum in Hungarian with an English summary, along with other information from Nagy can be found in: NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 44, WN 20418 and NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 471, WN 17732-17742.

source Streeter had.[42] In his diary, he recorded the following regarding his first encounter with what would, in modern parlance, be termed his case officer: "'Signor Stephano' comes to visit. They heard news on the American channel that I was coming. He is the leader of the Hungarian branch of the president's [Harry S. Truman – É.P.] information organization. Regarding the memorandum for the Holy Father he said it was by far the most intelligent, exhaustive, and systematic of them all."[43]

Nagy agreed to cooperation in hopes that his situation reports would positively influence the outcome of the peace treaties.[44] Working with the OSS apparently did not cause him any moral quandary, as he instead felt that he engaged in secret diplomacy in support of his country and church. "[I]t's of crucial importance that I met 'Signor Stephano,'" he recorded in his diary a few days later, with their meeting leaving a similar impression on Streeter.[45] Following their meetings, on August 27, 1945 Streeter and Press wrote a summary informing James Angleton Jr., then head of OSS counterintelligence in Italy and later the CIA's counterintelligence chief, not only about Nagy, but about the information he brought, and his 'access.' Because of his ties in the Vatican and Hungary, US intelligence saw him as someone significant with whom contact should be maintained.[46] Accordingly, it is not surprising that Nagy's return to Hungary at the end of August 1945 was facilitated by both the Rome and Salzburg branches of OSS. As was his custom, he did not complain about having to travel alone or being bored while doing so.

We learn from Nagy's diary that he departed Rome for Hungary on August 24, 1945 in a car "Signor Stephano" had provided, traveling, amongst others, with an American Major towards northern Italy. "Beau-

42 Also among the Hungarian members of Streeter's JA network was Imre Mócsy SJ [under the code number AE754]. Fr Mócsy was professor at the New Testament Department of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, as well as pastor to the Hungarians at the refugee camp established in Cinecittà. Through these efforts, he caught the attention of OSS, likewise becoming an agent/informant as well as, on several occasions Nagy's intermediary with Streeter. NARA II, RG 226, E 108, B 202 and NARA II, RG 226, E 212, B 3, WN 20777.

43 As in: Streeter believed Töhötöm Nagy's report to the Pope was the most detailed, the best of the reports available to the Americans at the time. *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 16 August 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/9.

44 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 24, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

45 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] August 19, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/9.

46 August 27, 1945; *JBX-194; Organization of KALOT,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 174, B 129, F 978.

tiful, familiar seaside road. Livorno, Pisa. Dusk sets. Dinner in Lucca. [...] Arriving at Modena at 1.30 AM. Sleeping in a gorgeous American officer's hotel."[47] They reached Salzburg over the next days, where he writes that "one [m]orning Zsolt Aradi appears with a great black car and takes me to the top of the 1,200 meter high Gaisberg, stopping on the way back near the mid-point, and offering lodging in a nice villa, a small American officer's hotel [likely, Hotel Rosenhof]. Fantastic lunch. Fresh meat from America, oranges from California. [...] Excursion to the old imperial resort in the afternoon. Beautiful lakes. I attend mass."[48]

Rejuvenated physically and mentally, Nagy was ready for the more challenging leg of his journey. He traveled to Fehring via Graz with his OSS officer escort, but continued alone, organizing his clandestine crossing of the Austrian-Hungarian frontier on his own. The Fehring and later Neuhaus parish priests helped him reach Mogersdorf, an Austrian village mentioned in his other account, on August 31. Here, the two narratives converge, but the diary offers more detail. It reports that he easily crossed the Rába river on September 1: "Swimming children carry me on their shoulders, like a flat, long plank, even taking my luggage."

With these words, he notes the moment and way in which he reached Hungarian soil carrying the letter announcing József Mindszenty's appointment to Prince Primate in his suitcase's lining. The rest of his journey followed the now-familiar Rábatótfalu–Szentgotthárd–Szombathely route, all the way to Budapest until arriving back along the Danube on the night of September 2nd.

2.

Once again at home, Nagy gave the letter on Mindszenty's appointment to Kerkai, because "[w]e decided Fr Kerkai will deliver the letter to Mindszenty, as he was his pupil at high school..."[49] Nagy commented upon his own situation, noting that he did not stay in the Jesuit residence for security reasons, but in Budapest's 9th district, on Bokréta street, in a small room

47 Detailed description of his journey home: *Handwritten pages. 24 August – 3 September 1945.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. et passim

48 OSS Austria's SI Section, based for most of 1945 in Salzburg, operated facilities in the now defunct Hotel Rosenhof on Gaisberg. See Beer, "Salzburg nach dem Krieg," 120.

49 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 188.

owned by an institution of the Daughters of Divine Love.[50] This helps explain why it was ultimately József Grősz, the Archbishop of Kalocsa, who gave Mindszenty his letter of appointment, and not Kerkai. Archbishop Grősz was visited on September 5th "[b]y the Budapest Caritas secretary Szölgyémy, who handed over a properly sealed letter, saying it was sent by Witz, the archbishop's vicar. [...] [T]he letter stated that the Bishop of Veszprém, József Mindszenty, was thereby appointed to the position of Archbishop of Esztergom..."[51]

All that Nagy notes, however—apart from what he had done in Rome and upon his return, giving the letter to Kerkai—was Mindszenty visiting him. A contemporary diary entry of this meeting has never been found. However, according to a description written some time afterwards, Nagy was visited at his accommodation on Bokréta street on September 11, 1945 by Mindszenty, who knew that he had brought Pope Pius XII's letter for him from Rome. According to Nagy's account, written almost two decades later, he told Mindszenty, who, in turn shared his position and his doubts about accepting the appointment, what had transpired in Rome. Eventually "he listed his reason for accepting, and said the word 'affirmative' with visible emotion."[52] In another account—also composed decades later—Nagy reflected upon how he felt at the time, offering insight into his motivation: "[t]hese circumstances and the humble sentence that I would be able to see how much he had improved as of late, left me with the feeling that he saw me as more than a delivery boy."[53]

Nagy and Kerkai hoped that, as advisors, they might be able to influence the newly appointed Prince Primate, which, if it were a viable occurrence, could greatly benefit KALOT. Even in retrospect, their expectations were not unfounded: Mindszenty did not always mistrust the two Jesuits, as is confirmed in a letter that he wrote Pope Pius XII, in which he drew the Holy Father's attention to Nagy, which referred to KALOT as "our crown"—*corona nostra*—in appreciation.[54]

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50 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 3 September 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.
51 Török, *Grősz József*, 258–59.
52 Giving consent, approval. Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 189, and Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 24–27.
53 Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 26.
54 *Mindszenty's mandate letter for Töhötöm Nagy.* Esztergom, September 20, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/487.

Almost contemporary to this, near the end of September 1945, a text surfaced in which Mindszenty, still the Bishop of Veszprém at the time, praised KALOT. Signed by Mindszenty on August 10, 1945, it was only published in *Új Ember* (New man), a weekly periodical, on September 23rd, in an article entitled *A KALOT elmúlt tíz évéről* [On the past 10 years of KALOT].[55] In it, Mindszenty showers the movement with sincere appreciation: "As the bishop of this ancient diocese founded by Saint Stephen, where in so many villages so many hitherto neglected, orphaned rural youths were embraced, and set aflame with the holiest ideas, I dip the flag of heartfelt appreciation before the leadership and the entire KALOT movement."

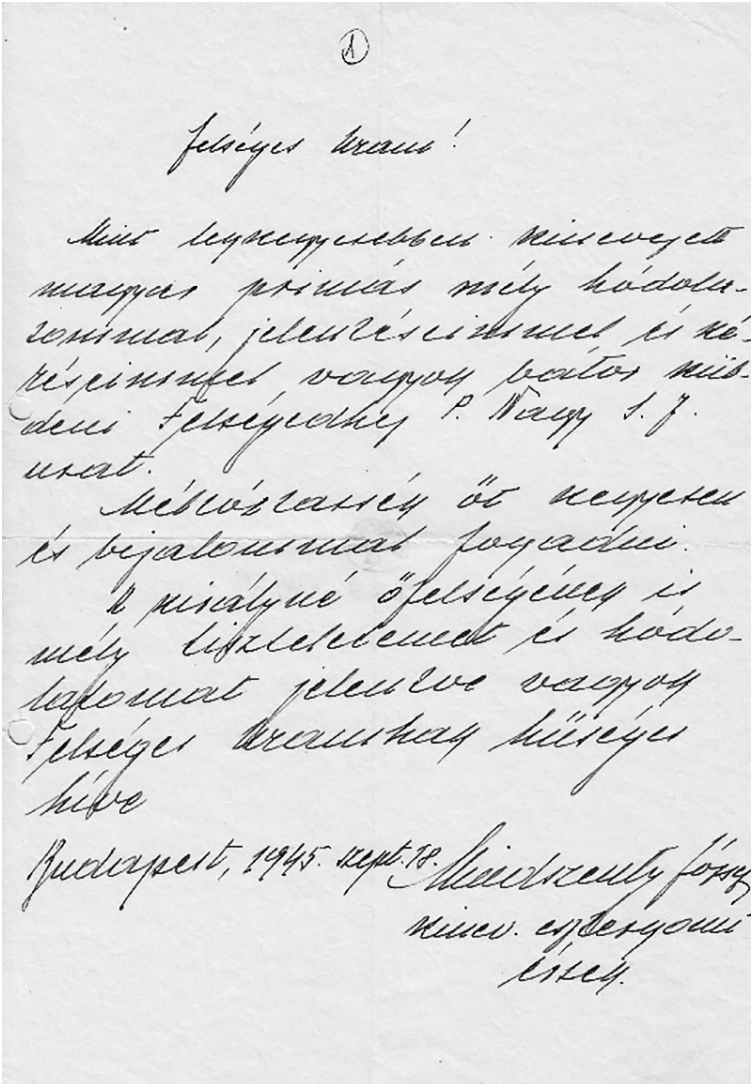
Following Mindszenty's appointment, a further sign of his trust in Nagy may be seen by his tasking the latter to use his next journey to Rome as an opportunity to travel on to Paris and deliver the Prince Primate's letters to Otto von Habsburg, who was, at the time, residing in the French capital.[56] Nagy later remarked on this:

> [t]he next time I visited him [Mindszenty], he brought up the royal issue. He elaborated that, according to Hungarian civil law, he was *homo regius*, i.e. supreme public authority, and as such, he felt it was his duty to take steps to restore the proper legal situation. Hungary officially remained a monarchy, and its legitimate king, Otto II of Habsburg was living, so the least he could do in this matter, as a first step, would be to pay homage to the heir to the throne. As a result, he commissioned me to visit His Majesty [Otto von Habsburg] with a formal letter. I would then describe his plans orally, among which the first was to prevent the proclamation of a republic. [...] I was astonished to hear that today, when the Soviet boot was standing with its entire weight on half of Europe, among the first things that came to this man's mind was to take steps to restore the Habsburg dynasty, or at least to pay homage to Otto as Hungary's legitimate ruler.[57]

55 Mindszenty, "A KALOT."

56 One letter of the two still exists: *József Mindszenty's letter to Archduke Otto Habsburg.* Veszprém, 22 September 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/486. Mindszenty also sent his letters by other couriers, rightly believing that this would increase the likelihood of them reaching their intended recipient.

57 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 190.



Letter of Archbishop József Mindszenty to Otto von Habsburg

Based on contemporary primary sources, it remains impossible to determine whether Nagy had been aware of the extent of Mindszenty's legitimist tendencies. Ultimately, since he was already planning his second journey to Rome in any event, he took Mindszenty's letters to Otto, promising to deliver them. He and Kerkai were preparing a report for the Pope on the status of the Hungarian Church, talking over what Nagy was sup-

posed to represent at the Jesuit Generalate, and when negotiating with the Americans.[58]

With these reports and documents in hand, Nagy left for Rome again on September 25, 1945, travelling the Szentgotthárd–Fehring–Graz route, after which he was escorted by the Americans, ultimately, although not completely unhindered, reaching Italy via Salzburg. He arrived at "The Eternal City" for the second time on October 11. The circumstances of this journey are expounded upon in an Italian letter written to Pope Pius XII: "I humbly report that although faced by a thousand dangers, swimming across the river in cold weather, spending the night outside, sitting atop trains, and buried in the depths of trucks, with God's help, I have arrived from Hungary as a personal delegate of Primate and Archbishop of Esztergom József Mindszenty to deliver my report."[59]

All that Nagy had experienced during his 16-day journey did not stop him from strolling through Rome, however:

> I made a pilgrimage to San Pietro in the afternoon. I knelt at the Confession[60] and gave thanks for the new Primate, my lucky return, and I meditated briefly on the big issues of the world Church. At the Confession, I almost physically felt that I was at the earthly center of our faith: this is where we Catholics localize our faith to the Church. I admired again the majestic arcs of St Peter's, the delicate features of Michelangelo's Pietà, Mary's girlish face… During evening recreation, I was alone on the terrace, I went to the edge, from where I could see all of St Peter's Square, including the Pope's suite and the marvelous dome. I stared at it for half an hour, and truly felt the fire grow in me more and more: Rome, Vatican, Pope. There is the light from his window, a shadow glides behind the curtain, maybe it's him, the 265th successor to the man that lays in the secret depths of the Confession… And now I'm able to serve this power.[61]

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58 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 24, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. and *Jenő Kerkai's memorandum on the tasks in Rome*. Budapest, September 23, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/494.

59 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Pius XII.* Roma, 18 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/260. and *Beatissimo padre [Most Blessed Father].* Roma, 18 Ottobre 1945. Copies from the material of the order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Singulorum, 1913–1949/1942–1945.

60 Here: Saint Peter's grave and the altar built above it.

61 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 13 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

Nagy's personal mission, his vocation, and all that was in between evolved over the course of his journeys to Rome. True, he recognized and creatively adapted to situations, and made good use of opportunities, but he always did so as a Jesuit. He was guided by faithful obedience, consciously reflecting upon his ties to the Church, the Pope, the Jesuit Order and his nation. "I too, am a factor in the Hungarian part of the great world Church. I bring our woes, our laments, I expect help, support. I am a courier of God's matter: can one be idle and frivolous? What a responsibility before God, the Church, and the nation,"[62] he confessed.

This journey witnessed major changes within Nagy, at least with regards to his relationship with József Mindszenty. The shift may well have been a general one—which Margit Balogh refers to as "a consequence of the outlook on life, more subtle information, the Roman air."[63] However, historical sources tie the change more substantively to information he received from the US intelligence services, OSS and SSU, along with his experiences at the Vatican. Due to these impulses, Nagy's attitude towards Mindszenty's views and political activity morphed during his second stay in Rome, coinciding with his recognition of the role he could play as something "more than a delivery boy." Based on the information and impressions he gained, he sought to inform and advise Mindszenty, and, faced with the Primate's inflexibility and political machinations, began distancing himself from him, even if only gradually at first.

In the beginning, it appeared as though Nagy harbored few doubts about either the contents of Mindszenty's letters to Otto, or his own role in delivering them. When he met "Signor Stephano" shortly after returning in Rome, he inquired whether he could travel with US assistance to Paris and Otto.[64] "Signor Stephano" immediately recognized the significance of such a trip, and therefore asked for some time in order for Washington to make a decision. To help further Nagy's case, he said that he needed to photostat and translate Otto's letters. Nagy readily handed them over.[65]

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62 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 13 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

63 Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 421.

64 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 18 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

65 Photostats and English translations of Mindszenty's letters to Otto and the Pope can be found in: 29 October 1945; *JBX-243; Hungarian dissident groups: Letter to Otto Habsburg from Hungarian Prince Primate*, and 30 October 1945; *JBX-244; Hungarian dissident groups: Letter addressed to Vatican by Prince Primate of Hungary*, both in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108, B 202. The

While awaiting an answer, however, the inquisitive Hungarian cleric spoke with a number of people about the feasibility of a Habsburg restoration, through which he learned that the mission he had planned, as well as Mindszenty's monarchism, posed significant foreign policy risks. The idea of restoring the monarchy had lost sway, as his conversations with another US intelligence officer, Martin Himler, convinced him.[66] According to Himler: "America has and will deal with the Habsburg family as with every other refugee monarch—this is also UK policy: to put them on ice so they won't spoil, because they might be needed one day, but it doesn't have any special positive aims with them, especially not to simply put them back on their throne. [...] I believe Habsburg restoration exists solely in the hazy, uncertain future, where it still depends on several conditions that are almost never met. "[67]

Nagy then questioned Himler about the peace treaties and the likelihood of a new world war breaking out. He learned that the Americans were rapidly demobilizing and withdrawing their troops from Europe. Furthermore, in Himler's opinion, they were going to try and reach an agreement with the Russians as an "Eastern European people" on the continent.[68]

Thereafter, Nagy sought to solicit as much information and gather as many opinions as possible concerning the Soviet Union's new geopolitical situation and what ramifications it would have for Central Europe. During his next meeting with Streeter, he asked him about these topics. In his answer, "Signor Stephano" drew Nagy's attention to Hungary's geopolitical situation: "It's determined by three factors: the first one is geographi-

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most sensitive parts of these reports, including handwritten and photostats of the actual letters were separated and held onto by CIA until declassified owing to the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They can be found in: NARA II, RG 226, E 211, Box 40, WN 19891-19900.

66 Martin Himler (born Márton Himler in Pásztó; 1888–1961), was a Hungarian-American journalist, entrepreneur, and intelligence officer who became the head of OSS and later SSU Austria's Hungarian intelligence section in 1945. Himler was nominally Aradi's superior, although Aradi was formally attached to OSS and SSU Austria's Special Projects section. Himler reported in 1945 and 1946 using the codenames "Dean" and "Carrick."

67 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome (11 October – 19 November 1945).* Rome, 21 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/48. 10. and *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 26 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

68 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 26 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. and Nagy found this information so important that he wrote a report for Pope Pius XII, too. ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124, ff. 273–277.

cal, Hungary is a neighboring country of the Soviet superpower; second, Russians are already in the country; and third, the Soviets are allied with the United States. It follows that Hungarians can be upset with the Soviets, but they cannot be on bad terms with them. The Hungarians themselves and their organizations must draw the appropriate conclusions from this."[69]

Because of the delayed response from Washington, Streeter made Nagy the following offer concerning his proposed trip to Paris: An American airplane could take him to Paris in a private capacity, with the Americans looking the other way as to what he was up to.[70]

However, by that point, Nagy was no longer interested in delivering Mindszenty's letters, but, rather, in finding an excuse *not* to deliver them. He would later state that he was the one to overrule the Primate's efforts and elected on his own not to deliver the letters. It was certainly his idea to co-opt a clerical superior as an accomplice in officially prohibiting the trip: After all, if he were not allowed to travel to Paris, it would be impossible for him to deliver the letters. Referring to himself in the third person after the fact, he wrote: "Father Nagy didn't take these two letters to Otto, because he simply thought it was bordering on insanity to think of restoration given the historical circumstances, so he asked Fr General to prevent him from continuing his journey, a prohibition which he ultimately received."[71] Interestingly, he linguistically dissociated himself from the entire series of events.[72]

It cannot be determined presently whether the scheme had truly been conjured up by Nagy, or by his immediate Provincial Superior, Fr Borbély.[73] Whatever the case, in recognizing the matter's sensitivity, Fr Borbély sent Nagy to Assistant General Fr Karl Brust,[74] who passed him upwards to Vicar General Fr Norbert de Boynes. Or perhaps Nagy, aware of the

69 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 30 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

70 As elections for the National Assembly neared, the relation of superpowers to Hungarian domestic policy became an issue. The United States followed the principle of non-interference and distanced itself from events surrounding the election. Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War,* 59.

71 As noted above, at that point, the Society of Jesus was being led by the Vicar General.

72 *Data on Mindszenty's political role.* [Budapest] [Around June 1971] ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 128.

73 István Borbély SJ (1903–1987) was a Jesuit, and head of the Hungarian province between 1943 and December 1948. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 36.

74 Karl Brust SJ (1889–1949) was a German Jesuit, at the time rector of *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum* in Rome and Jesuit Assistant General.

issue's severity, asked for directives from his superiors each step of the way. As he reported to Fr Boynes on the mission he had received from Mindszenty, he commented that a restoration would benefit KALOT as well as the Catholic church, since "[l]egitimate succession to the royal throne may become a serious weapon today in saving the Christian faith. This makes the matter an issue that transgresses the limits of simple political activity. I have heard from well-informed sources that the Anglo-Saxons have plans for Archduke Otto, if his people want him. My mission could speed up the redemption of Hungarian Catholicism through Archduke Otto."[75]

In Fr Boynes's answer, which we only know from Nagy's description, the Vicar General stated: "... I have decided to not let him travel to Paris. This is politics, which is forbidden for us. If you're interested in my opinion, I can tell you that I consider a Habsburg restoration entirely hopeless at this time. Hopeless because today progress is tending towards popular democracy, too much even, and who would choose a king in Europe given these tendencies?"[76]

Whatever transpired, the answer Nagy had received from his superiors cleared his conscience. He was further relieved to receive confirmation from the Vatican that the issue of Habsburg restoration should be approached carefully, if at all. The report on the Hungarian situation, brought from Budapest and translated into Italian with the help of Hungarian fathers at the Jesuit Generalate, gave Nagy a new reason to meet with Pope Pius XII. In light of the above, the introduction adds an interesting dimension, stating: made according to Primate Mindszenty's intentions and the information proffered by him.[77] In this way, Nagy could receive first-hand information on many matters, among them the political issues he was concerned with.

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75 *Pro memoria.* Rome, le 24 Octobre, 1945. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in French. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Singulorum, 1913–1949/1942–1945. His "well-informed sources" clearly refer to his American connections.

76 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome (11 October – 19 November 1945).* Rome, 21 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/48. 8–9. and NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 200.

77 With the words, "I present this data on behalf of His Eminence, József Mindszenty, Primate of Hungary." Nagy began his summary. *La situazione in Ungheria al 25 Settembre 1945 [The situation in Hungary until 25 September 1945].* Roma, 18 Ottobre 1945. Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Singulorum, 1913–1949/1942–1945. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124, ff. 548–567.

Against this background, the Holy Father received Nagy for a second private audience on October 23, 1945, the impressions of which Nagy immediately recorded in his diary.[78] He later summed up the main talking points to Mindszenty, and passed the summary on to the Americans.[79] According to this, Pius listened to a detailed description on the current state of Hungary following from Nagy's report, and asked about the possibilities for Catholic politics. In answering, Nagy informed the Pope of the Democratic People's Party, still forming at the time from the Christian Democratic People's Party. According to Nagy's records, the Pope is purported to have remarked: "Surely some people don't think the old world is coming back?"[80]

At this point, Nagy felt comfortable bringing up the royalist issue, mentioning Mindszenty's desire for him to go to Paris. Pius XII remained cautious: "A Habsburg restoration would benefit a Central European Catholic bloc, but who would do it today? We may never have been as far from it as we are right now."[81]

Nagy later asked Fr Leiber, the Pope's personal secretary and an influential Vatican official, about Central European legitimist tendencies. Fr Leiber's answer was so poignant that Nagy asked his permission to note it on the spot.[82] The "afternoon Pope" amplified the words of the "morning Pope": "[I] find the possibility of a restoration hopeless, especially because in both countries [Austria and Hungary – É.P.], but mainly in Hungary, it is backed by the discredited paleoconservative aristocracy. Due to this fact, few people believe that a restoration would mean social progress and real democracy. In fact, they are afraid the opposite would happen. This is the main obstacle today."[83]

Nagy also tried to ascertain Leiber's opinion about the Soviet Union:

78 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 23 October 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.
79 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome [11 October – 19 November 1945].* Rome, 21 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/48. and NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 200.
80 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome [11 October – 19 November 1945].* Rome, 21 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/48. 2.
81 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome [11 October – 19 November 1945],* 3.
82 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 1 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.
83 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome [11 October – 19 November 1945],* 9, and *Diary excerpt* [Rome] November 1, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

> I asked the Father whether it was true that Moscow had made steps toward a rapprochement with the Vatican. He answered: "It's untrue that Moscow sought rapprochement. Conversely, we have made it known on several occasion, that we were willing to make contact." The first time was years ago, in Ankara, but we received no substantive response; then while [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt was still alive, an excellent Catholic diplomat of the president mentioned the Vatican's intention to [Vyacheslav M.] Molotov himself, who partly avoided giving an answer, while simultaneously offering some encouragement. At this time, steps towards rapprochement are now being made in Stockholm by both sides, but we cannot yet speak of any results. The Vatican would very much like to get into contact with Moscow, so it is awkward if certain clericals exacerbate an already unfavorable situation in an official capacity.

With these words, Leiber informed Nagy about the state of Vatican diplomacy vis-à-vis the Soviets, as well as their position towards Mindszenty.[84]

During this second trip to Rome, Nagy was given plenty of food for thought. He had gained insights he felt must be shared with Mindszenty as soon as possible. Although he continued to believe that Mindszenty would change course, he also confessed to a growing despondency about the Primate's views: "I exited His Excellency's [Tardini's – É.P.] room embarrassed, having had to hear about such matters on my Primate's behalf. We Hungarians are, in the eyes of the Vatican, seen as being unable to learn even from the most terrible of catastrophes, with it instead being necessary to have explained to us the most elementary ABCs of realpolitik, syllable by syllable."[85]

Nagy also wanted to share what he had learned with Kerkai, particularly about the international political and diplomatic maneuvering he was involved in, so that their outcomes could be aligned to KALOT's benefit. His eight-day spiritual exercise finished in early November, and he was preparing for his return journey, when he was told that the Vatican had further need of his services. Accordingly, on November 15 and

84 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] November 1, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.
85 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 200.

16, he met Mons. Domenico Tardini, Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, and Mons. Giovanni Battista Montini, Substitute of the Secretariat of State for Ordinary Affairs.[86] During both meetings, the topic of discussion was the reopening of the Budapest nunciature and the feasibility of sending a papal nuncio to Budapest in order to consolidate diplomatic ties between the Vatican and Hungary.[87] The impulse for these negotiations—as Nagy learned from Tardini—was a letter Mindszenty had sent to the Pope on the issue, and which arrived at the Vatican Secretariat of State during Nagy's stay in Rome. Montini, who met with Nagy again, entrusted him to inform Mindszenty that "[t]he Holy See looks forward to the day when the Hungarian government asks for the nunciature to be reopened. Although it wasn't the Hungarian government, but the Soviet one that expelled the Nuncio, the first steps must be taken by the government, because [...] the government is able to provide assurances hereby requested by the Holy See..."[88]

As a result of this, Nagy played a tangential role in yet another important diplomatic matter. He was unable to deliver the message and impart other information in a timely fashion,[89] since he left for Budapest on November 22 (arriving on December 5), just as the Primate moved in the opposite direction: His journey to Rome commenced on November 29, and he arrived there on December 2. As a result, during Mindszenty's time in Rome, he engaged in talks directly with the Pope, and forged his own impressions.[90]

Nonetheless, Nagy's journey to Rome had been beneficial. His suitcase contained several packages and gifts, the delivery of which was important, albeit dangerous. In his biographical documents, records become more sporadic from November 22, 1945 onwards, as he was unable to take notes

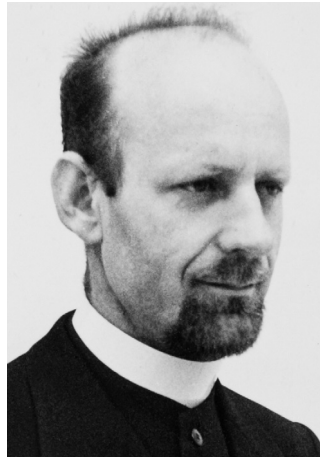
86 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 15 and 16 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. and *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome [11 October – 19 November 1945].* Rome, 21 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/48. 4–5.

87 The issue was not so much "resuming contact," as the ties had not been severed following Rotta's expulsion, but rather, of "reopening" the diplomatic mission (the Italian term used is "*riapertura*," or, to reopen, rather than "*riprese*" or to resume.) Csorba, *A római magyar követ jelenti*, 57.

88 *Report on the results of my second stay in Rome [11 October – 19 November 1945].* Rome, 21 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/48. 4.

89 *My journeys. Journey II.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.

90 Balogh M., *Mindszenty József*, 503–511 and Gergely J., "Magyar–szentszéki diplomáciai kapcsolatok," 74–82.



Töhötöm Nagy as "Pál Ormai", a Hungarian Jesuit from Romania

as often as previously. All the same, those whose work entailed writing reports mention Nagy frequently. From one of Streeter's reports, we learn that Nagy's second return from Rome was also facilitated by his American friends. The Balkan counterintelligence (X-2) branch of SSU Italy (the successor to OSS Italy), arranged for Nagy to fly on an Italian airplane to Treviso. From there, he continued to Venice, where he introduced himself to the local Jesuits as a Romanian Jesuit named "Pál Ormai," partaking for several days in their hospitality.[91]

In the interim, Aradi was notified by telegram, and arrived from Austria to meet Nagy, before escorting him to Salzburg on November 27.[92] Nagy only dedicates a few lines to what transpired over the following days:

> 29 November: Brenner, Innsbruck, Salzburg.
> 30 Nov: In the morning to Vienna via Linz in American uniform. Flat tire. Can't get out, no suspenders for my pants.

91 Pál Ormai SJ (1902–1978) was in fact a Hungarian Jesuit father serving in Romania, at the Cluj-Mănăștur parish, who wound up working in the Romanian Jesuit Province. He was head of the Cluj-Napoca community after World War II and sentenced to 15 years in prison for "plotting against social order." On this, see Bánkuti, *A romániai jezsuiták*, 156–157. and Pálos, *Viharon*, 17. Nagy probably knew him since the Novitiate, as Ormai also joined the Jesuit Order in 1926.

92 1 March 1946; *JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] Preliminary Report,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481. and Bare, "The curious case," 120.

> 5 Dec: Departed in vehicle convoy. In American pilot's uniform with a Polish count to Budapest via Komárom. We arrive at night, bridges closed. Dress in priestly garb again in the car in the dark.[93]

Even from the few details above, it becomes clear that Nagy's return journey was anything but straightforward. By all accounts, he was likely relieved to arrive at the Budapest Jesuit residence, with his clothes and identity again in sync. At least for a short while.

3.

Since Nagy's secret journeys to Rome were known to so many, rumors about him began to grow rather naturally. In his memorandum on Jesuits, the abbot of Zirc, Vendel Endrédy, describes how Nagy had told him that he wanted to quickly get to Rome in the early winter of 1945, and, although he could have gotten a passport, left illegally, since it would have taken many weeks otherwise. "He swam across a border river, the Rába, the Lapincs, or the Lajta in December when it was high."[94] Every element of the description—as we have seen above—is accurate; however, with the exception of one particular instance: Nagy did swim across the Rába, one of the three rivers mentioned, albeit in September rather than December. He also did not travel to Rome in the early winter, but returned from there at that time, hastily departing shortly afterwards, not for Rome, but for Romania. He had been commissioned to visit that country by the Vatican (and his SSU handlers). All this underlies a rather common tendency Nagy exhibited for sharing stories containing accurate elements but drawn from multiple experiences. He even remarked upon this, proudly stating to his KALOT colleagues and Provincial Superior Fr Borbély. "I told a lot of stories during evening recreation… They listened in awe. Everything was true, but a little old; 3-4 months perhaps. Jóska [short version of József – É.P.] Ugrin and S. Meggyesi came to visit in the afternoon: I had to tell everything. They grew excited as they could see a reason for our struggle and the future possibilities. I handed over the gifts."[95]

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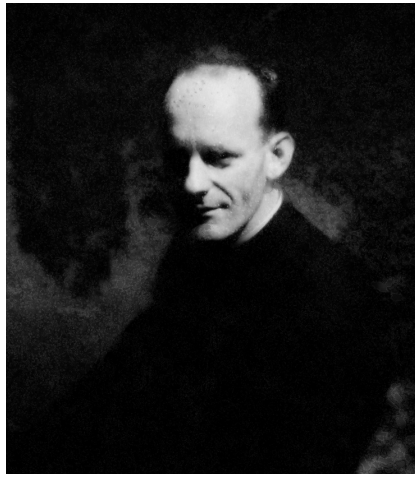
93 *Diary excerpts*. 29 November – 5 December 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 5. fol.
94 Cúthné, ed., *Egy fogoly apát feljegyzései,* 163.
95 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 3 September 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

Only a select few, such as Jenő Kerkai, were told the full truth. On these occasions, Nagy did not simply recount his journey to Rome and impressions, but also listened to Kerkai's reports about the domestic situation with regards to political considerations and ecclesiastical policy, the Primate's public activities, the Jesuit Order, and other matters. In Rome, Nagy was informed about the circular Mindszenty had issued on the eve of the elections to the National Assembly,[96] the results, and the triumph of the Smallholders' Party.[97] Kerkai told him about the goings-on within KALOT which signaled the first, promising results of the post-war restart. For a brief moment, it seemed that everything, along with a great deal of effort, was under control and going as well as could be hoped. Nagy's experiences in Rome ultimately convinced both him and Kerkai that it was vital for the Church to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union.[98] Furthermore, they were confident that this was the path the Vatican wished for the Hungarian Church to follow, regardless of what the Primate's opinion might be.



Töhötöm Nagy in cassock

96 *Circulares litterae adioecesanae anno 1945. Ad clerum archidioecesis Strigoniensis dimissae, XIV. [Archdiocesan circulars of the year 1945. Letter 14. sent to the clergy of Esztergom].* Esztergom, 18 October 1945. In *Az Esztergomi Főegyházmegye körlevelei [Circulars of the Esztergom Archdiocese], 1855–1995.* 67–70.

97 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 12 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 5. fol.

98 Balogh, *A KALOT*, 175–176.

Before the next step, Nagy had one more mission to complete: delivering Pius XII's letters to Alba Iulia and to Áron Márton, the Bishop of the Transylvanian diocese, and gathering as much information as possible on the ecclesiastical and political situation in Romania to share with his interlocutors, both Vatican and American, during his next visit to Rome. For this reason, Nagy does not appear in any public capacity between Christmas 1945 and January 18, 1946. During those several weeks, he was in Romania, and jotted down only a few short notes. Still, from his report given to the Americans in March 1946, we learn that he left Budapest for Szeged on December 23, 1945, clandestinely crossing the Romanian-Hungarian border the following night, Christmas Eve.[99] There was apparently a minor incident at the border, when a border guard shot at him; however, Nagy was not injured. According to his report, he reached Alba Iulia with great difficulty, and met Áron Márton, delivering what the Pope had sent for him.[100] From there, he traveled to Bucharest on January 2, meeting with prominent Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish figures. There, he was able to assess the degree of Russian cultural infiltration in Romanian churches, especially the Greek Catholic and Orthodox ones. After his meetings, he returned to Alba Iulia on January 10, 1946, where Márton's reports, commissioned by Rome, were awaiting him. According to his account, Nagy later delivered these to the Vatican, however making a few copies for himself; theology professor Dr Ferenc Faragó's summary on the state of the Greek Catholic Church;[101] Dr Béla Gajdátsy's paper on Romanian Orthodoxy,[102] and Ernő Veress' which described the practical experiences of the concordat between the Holy See and Romania.[103] He

99 March 1, 1946; *JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] Preliminary Report*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

100 Much later, when investigating the Alba Iulia Archbishopric's activities, the Securitate also learned of his stay. Aladár Szoboszlay case material. A.C.N.S.A.S. P-000156 vol. 1. 31–32. Aladár Szoboszlay (1925–1958) was the diocesan priest of Timisoara (Temesvár), who was sentenced to death and executed in 1958.

101 *Dr Ferenc Faragó's summary on the Transylvanian Greek Catholic Church.* Alba Iulia, 10 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/55. Ferenc Faragó (1905–1973), canon of Alba Iulia was a theology professor and vice-director of the Cluj-Napoca Theology College from 1941.

102 *Dr Béla Gajdátsy's paper on the Romanian Orthodox Church.* Alba Iulia, 10 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/56. Béla Gajdátsy (1887–1952) was rector of the Alba Iulia Seminary and a canon lawyer. Imprisoned in 1951, he died one year later in captivity.

103 *Ernő Veress' assessment of the concordat between the Apostolic Holy See and Romania.* Alba Iulia, 10 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/57. Ernő Veress (1892–1973) was a theology professor in

also promised to deliver Márton's report on the situation of Hungarians in Transylvania, which Nagy said had been typed by the bishop himself, as well as vicar Károly Pakocs' summary from September 1945.[104]

Nagy did not spend long with Márton, who advised him to leave immediately, as he had been told that the police had him under surveillance. Heeding the bishop's advice, Nagy left for Hungary on the same day, January 10. Upon arriving at the Alba Iulia train station, he was detained by a Soviet patrol. He told the soldiers that he was a Jesuit from Szatmár visiting Bucharest on church business and presented his fake identification as "Pál Ormai." While this was being checked, he realized that his train to Arad had arrived, so he boarded. His captors, noticing his disappearance, jumped aboard through another door to catch Nagy. By then, however, he had jumped off the already moving train. Later, he wrote about his experience:

> This was the time I came closest to getting caught: they stopped me at a station and wanted to bring me back to Bucharest, where I knew that a thorough search would find sensitive documents on me, compromising many. So, I jumped out of the slowly moving train from between the two guards in the dead of night. I ran back, through fields, in endlessly deep mud, under a cold drizzle, exhausted to the extreme, dropping to the mud at the slightest sound, until I could get on a freight train which brought me back to life.[105]

In this way, Nagy made his way to Arad, where he again crossed the frontier illegally, albeit successfully, arriving in Budapest on January 18.[106]

During Nagy's hazardous Romanian intermezzo, Hungarian domestic politics had primarily been concerned with the form of government. In the weeks leading up to the republic's proclamation, many persons arrived

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Alba Iulia and spiritual director. On the Romanian concordat see also: Bánkuti, *A romániai jezsuiták*, 21–31.

104 *Áron Márton's summary for Pius XII.* Alba Iulia, 10 January 1946. Typewritten, unsigned document, to which Töhötöm Nagy appended a single handwritten page [on the origin story] on September 12, 1968. Ibid: *Károly Pakocs' paper.* Alba Iulia, September 25, 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/73. On the life and activities of Károly Pakocs see Tempfli, *Sárból és napsugárból*.

105 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 177.

106 March 1, 1946; *JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] Preliminary Report,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

at opinions about the issue, with a number being swayed by Mindszenty's political statements. These had caused Nagy so much headache in the fall that he had ultimately sabotaged the delivery of the Primate's letters to Otto von Habsburg. For his part, Mindszenty returned optimistically from his first trip as Primate to Rome, speaking positively about the talks concerning the nunciature's reopening,[107] as well as his pending elevation to the rank of Cardinal.[108] Owing to these developments, it appeared as though he enjoyed the Vatican's full support, rendering his reaction to the republic's creation all the more emphatic.

Given the situation, Kerkai thought it best to appeal to the old, loving relationship between the two of them, and warned his former teacher via letter to refrain from commenting negatively about the republic as a form of government.[109] Kerkai's letter to Mindszenty notes that any adverse statement about the form of government would lead to "open war between the left-leaning state-power and the Church." Referencing their own search for a *modus vivendi,* he expressed his concern that: "[a]ssuming there is serious intent underlying the recent Soviet soft-pedalling, such a declaration would cut it short. However, it would be a service to the Church at home, perhaps even globally, to promote rapprochement."

Continuing, he emphasized that "[w]hether the Church makes this declaration, or avoids it, and the position of the Church on the Republic is one of passivity, it seems necessary that Your Eminence secretly promote the role of a Catholic line, which, as opposed to an open break-up or passive behavior, seeks to actively promote the case of the Catholic [Church] and the Hungarians within the framework of the Republic, given the presence of Soviet power."[110]

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107 According to US intelligence and Hungarian informants in Rome, not everything had gone smoothly for Mindszenty during his discussions in the city. 14 December 1945; *JVX-397; Report on József Mindszenty,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E UD174, B 1, F 2. For this reason, it became necessary for the matter to be spearheaded by an independent negotiator, József Jánosi SJ, a Jesuit close to Nagy. 27 December 1945; *JZX-5619; AE5's [Streeter's] Report on the arrival of Jánosi, a.k.a. Janicsek in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 261. According to an SSU report, Nagy met Jánosi in Budapest, after returning from his second journey to Rome. At that point, he informed Jánosi about the state of affairs in Rome. 30 January 1946; *JZX-5924; AE5's [Streeter's] Report about the first visit of Prince Primate in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 263.

108 Balogh, *Mindszenty József,* 512–19.

109 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to József Mindszenty.* Budapest, 28 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/508.

110 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to József Mindszenty.* Budapest, 28 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/508.

Eventually, having assessed the political situation, Mindszenty toned down his anti-republican remarks;[111] however, Kerkai's letter accentuated the differences in his and his erstwhile disciple's points of view. In Kerkai's opinion, coexisting with the new power and the search for a *modus vivendi* might be realized if a Catholic position existed that neither passively accepted the situation nor advocated open resistance to political changes.[112] The Jesuit was not alone: After assessing domestic and international developments, many questioned whether outright resistance of the sort championed by Mindszenty was the correct path forward, or if, perhaps, partial collaboration might minimize the dangers to the Catholic Church.[113]

Along with Kerkai and Nagy, the Jesuits pursued a somewhat different strategy, one that saw the *modus vivendi* as a *modus pugnandi*.[114] Proponents of this approach included Imre Mócsy, then active in Rome, and József Jánosi, also appearing from time to time in Rome on diplomatic missions.[115] Coordinating with one another, this handful of individuals hoped to secure the continued functioning of the Hungarian Catholic

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111 "Eventually Mindszenty resorted to recording recognized facts as opposed to protesting: '...[I] conclude that the discussion took place under foreign occupation, without asking the Hungarian people, with freedom of expression of the representatives restricted; therefore, the nation shall deliberate and pass judgment with these in consideration.'" In Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 495.

112 "Modus vivendi occupies an intermediate position between collaboration and resistance. It becomes necessary when collaboration is impossible for ideological reasons (at least in theory), but due to the balance of power or other considerations, resistance is neither advised, nor possible." [József Jánosi SJ]: *Modus vivendi.* P. József Jánosi's Reports, Part V. [1946.] Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 11–16. On the issue see also: Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 569, and Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 43.

113 Kenez, "The Hungarian Communist Party," 864–65.

114 Modus pugnandi = way/method of fighting; Fr. Jánosi used this term to characterize how he understood *modus vivendi*. [József Jánosi SJ]: *Modus vivendi.* P. József Jánosi's Reports, Part V. [1946.] Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 11–16.

115 József Jánosi (1898–1965) was a Jesuit, philosopher, and president of the *Szent Kereszt Egyesület* [Holy Cross Association], a Jewish rescue organization during World War II. He left the country in 1949 and worked with Radio Free Europe between 1951 and 1954. He died in 1965 in a fatal railroad accident, the circumstances of which remain unclear. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 104.

Church, the Jesuit Province, as well as Catholic ecclesiastical and political organizations, to say nothing of the budding Christian party. In addition to the Jesuits mentioned above, several Catholic politicians exhibited either a fainter or a more pronounced influence as a result of these ideas. First of these was the leader of the Democratic People's Party, István Barankovics,[116] along with the more flexible members of the Hungarian Catholic episcopate, such as the Bishop of Veszprém László Bánáss,[117] and the Archbishop of Eger Gyula Czapik.[118] Although this strain of ecclesiastical politics—as apparent from Kerkai's letter—was not originally opposed to the cardinal archbishop, he eventually came to think of it as such.[119] Remembering the meeting with Pope Pius XII at the time of his consistory in February 1946, Mindszenty remarked in his *Memoirs* that: "[Pius] stood with me until his death, and foiled every plot, intrigue and trick, initiated either by the Bolsheviks or by 'progressive' Catholics in their service."[120]

These "progressive Catholics" believed that a *modus vivendi* would not exacerbate tensions between the Church and Hungarian domestic political actors, the latter of whom were entering more and more into the orbit of the Communist Party the longer the Soviet occupation wore on. Success in this venture would have had ramifications for more than just Hungary, settling relations between the Vatican and the Soviet Union. As Kerkai put it: "it would be a service to the Church [...] perhaps even globally, to promote rapprochement."[121]

The "recent Soviet soft-pedalling" Kerkai mentions and Mindszenty's "'progressive' Catholics in the service of Bolsheviks" undoubtedly met each other at a certain point: István Barankovics extended an invitation to Nagy on January 24, 1946 from the Soviet city command of Budapest. Perhaps seeking to rekindle their old acquaintance, the Soviets wanted to

116 István Barankovics (1906–1974) was a Catholic journalist, and secretary-general of the Democratic People's Party. He left the country in 1949 and settled in the US.
117 László Bánáss (1888–1949) was the Bishop of Veszprém from 1946. He was a member of the Provisional National Assembly starting in 1944.
118 Gyula Czapik (1887–1956) served as the Archbishop of Eger from 1943. He was president of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops Conference between 1951 and 1956.
119 Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 569–70.
120 Mindszenty, *Emlékirataim*, 123–24.
121 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to József Mindszenty.* Budapest, January 28, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/508.

speak with Nagy about consolidating relations between the Vatican and the Soviet Union.[122] Following Nagy's positive answer, he, Kerkai, and Mr. and Mrs. Barankovics had dinner "under the most pleasant circumstances"[123] Some doubt nonetheless crept into Nagy's mind, as he rightfully believed it could not have been simple to locate and identify his Red Army interlocutors from more than a year earlier when he had crossed the front, however, he remained positive: "Apart from us, there were five Russian officers invited to the dinner, and I was surprised to see that they rounded up my old acquaintances, possibly with great difficulty, whom I had met, befriended even, more than a year ago at Malinovsky's headquarters. The dinner as a whole was characterized by an extremely fine and friendly series of courtesies."[124]

Béla Illés was present at the dinner and introduced to Nagy.[125] Later, Nagy asserted his belief that the explicit purpose of the dinner was for him, "a man of Rome," to meet Illés, "a man of Moscow." Illés, the creator of Captain Gusev, famous for his anecdotes and tall tales and possessed of a fine sense of humor, sat at the same table as Nagy, the Jesuit "secret agent of His Holiness."[126] The two of them, thanks to their compatible sense of humor and wild imaginations, dined together on January 29, 1946, trying to establish a rapprochement between the Vatican and the Soviet Union for Hungary's benefit. Amid random meetings in times of war and turmoil, the momentarily non-tragic history of Hungary flared up that night.

Nagy's old Soviet acquaintances may have evoked his experience of crossing the front one year earlier. They reminded Nagy of the more permissive line in ecclesiastical policy sustained by Stalin at the time of the war.[127] This impression was confirmed at a second meeting with Illés a few days later: "[I] could see they seriously wanted this, but viewed it with

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122 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] January 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

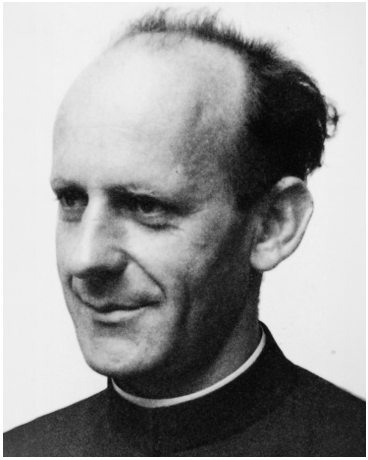
123 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 29 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

124 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 29 January 1946.

125 Béla Illés (1895–1974) was a Kossuth Prize-winning writer, journalist. He lived in the Soviet Union from 1923, fought in the Battle of Moscow in World War II, was a major of the Red Army, and participated in the liberation of Budapest. His famous, allegedly real, but apparently fictional, character was Captain Aleksey Gusev, an officer of the Russian Army which crushed the 1849 War of Independence, who was hanged owing to his criticism of the Russian intervention. Illés never admitted the historic forgery.

126 A play on words of course. (É.P.)

127 Cf. Balogh, "Lehetőségek és zsákutcák."



Töhötöm Nagy as Vatican diplomat

great suspicion. They were scared of approaching the Vatican and being rejected."[128]

Thus, Nagy having understood the Vatican's desire to pursue cautious rapprochement back in Rome, now was being confronted by the Soviet position. He felt he could serve as a mediator between the two parties, which would benefit the Hungarian Catholic Church's position, so long as the opportunity was not spoiled by Mindszenty, who was busy preparing for his martyrdom. While this was being discussed, the National Assembly passed Act I of 1946, declaring Hungary a republic. Mindszenty came under attack both from the public and the press, and ceased to trust politicians of the Smallholders' Party, foremost among them the new president, Zoltán Tildy, and his prime minister, Ferenc Nagy. Mindszenty even encountered difficulties in getting a new passport, causing his trip to Rome for the consistory where he would be made a Cardinal by Pius XII to be delayed.[129] From the Primate's perspective, the new developments

128 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 4 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. SSU knew of their dinner and negotiations even before Nagy returned to Rome. A report was filed on February 19th by Aradi, operating under the cover name "Kilkenny." Aradi's report noted that Nagy had promised, in the event of successful negotiations, that the Pope would send a gift to Stalin. For their part, the Soviets also promised that Stalin would send Pius XII a gift in return, likely a relic. February 19, 1946; *LA-339; Kilkenny's [Zsolt Aradi's] report on negotiations for Vatican/USSR concordat,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108, B 26.

129 Balogh, *Mindszenty József,* 512–19.

had delivered none of the benefits promised, but actually weakened his ability to consolidate the Church's position as well as his own.

Nagy's own opinion had undergone a fundamental change by then. On the same day, February 18, 1946, he departed for his third trip to Rome. In his small suitcase, he had secreted a new report on Hungary, along with the materials from Romania. In his head, he carried the details of new plans, goals, and many messages. This time, he travelled via Vienna, which he reached easily. There, US intelligence was waiting for him. As one of them reportedly remarked after receiving his report on the possibility of rapprochement between the Soviets and the Vatican: "Anytime he appears, it means a historical endeavor."[130] The year 1946 would revolve around this: who estimated the situation correctly, and could the *modus vivendi* be successful?

Table 1: Töhötöm Nagy's Trips to and from Rome, 1945–1946[131]

	Departure	Arrival	Route	Report(s)	Other Information
1.	9 April 1945	–	Budapest via Bucharest	–	Used the name "Emilio Faber"
2.	30 April 1945	12 July 1945	Budapest-Rome	Notes sur la situation actuelle de la Hongrie... (jusqu'au 14 juin 1945.)[132]	Used the name "Emilio Faber"
3.	24 August 1945	3 September 1945	Rome–Budapest	–	Brought Mindszenty's letter of appointment; Assisted by OSS
2.	25 September 1945	11 October 1945	Budapest-Rome	La situazione in Ungheria al 25 Settembre1945.[133]	Also took Mindszenty's letters for Otto Habsburg

130 *Diary excerpt* [Vienna] 19–22 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19.

131 OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. Based on data from the back cover of diary 2., diaries, and American intelligence data.

132 *Notes sur la situation actuelle de la Hongrie et des mouvements catholiques en Hongrie. (Jusqu'au 14 juin 1945) [Report on the current situation in Hungary and its Catholic movements (until 14 June 1945)].* Rome, le 14 juillet 1945. Copies from the materials of the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten French document. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Singulorum, 1913–1949/1942–1945. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124, ff. 237–250.

133 *La situazione in Ungheria al 25 Settembre 1945 [The situation in Hungary until 25 September 1945].* Roma, 18 Ottobre 1945. Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Singulorum, 1913–1949/1942–1945. and ASRS, AA.EE.

	22 November 1945	5 December 1945	Rome–Budapest	–	Helped by SSU to Treviso; Alone to Budapest from there[134]
3.	18 February 1946	3 March 1946	Budapest–Rome	Supplément confidentiel à la relation du 16 février 1946[135]	Helped by SSU from Vienna to Rome[136]
	8 May 1946	16 May 1946	Rome–Budapest	–	Part of SSU operation[137]
4.	5 July 1946	20 July 1946	Budapest–Rome	Rapporto sulle lotte interne del Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso)[138]	Escape of Zoltán Nyisztor with American help[139]
	7 August 1946	10 August 1946	Rome–Budapest	–	Helped by SSU via Vienna
5.	24 October 1946	5 November 1946	Budapest–Rome	Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November)[140]	

SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124, ff. 548–567.

134 NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

135 *Supplément confidentiel à la relation du 16 février 1946 (exclusivement pour Sa Sainteté). [Confidential supplement to the report of 16 February 1946 (exclusively for His Holiness)].* [Rome] 6 mars 1946. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in French. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

136 NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

137 NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 38, WN 20228.

138 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso).* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 25–45.

139 *Diary excerpts.* 5–20 July 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

140 The same is also extant in Italian: *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso).* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and *Jelentés a magyar katolicizmus helyzetéről (1946. november 5-ig bezárólag)* [Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)]. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50.

v.

"The Third Rome"[1]

"Well now...! [KALOT] had to be dissolved! [...] And in this immense struggle—no offense—the Primate himself was just a tool and an alibi, as was Töhötöm Nagy's meddling."[2]

1.

This time, on his way to Rome, Töhötöm Nagy was delayed for longer in Austria. Although he reached Vienna in one day, February 18, 1946, owing to the risk of being found out, he was supposed to continue his journey by plane only on March 1, but finally traveled as a car passenger: Capt. Rudolf von Ripper, a noted Salzburg artist before the war, and subsequently an OSS/SSU intelligence officer, helped Nagy reach Rome on March 3.[3] This was to be Nagy's longest period in Rome, with his goal being to "[n]egotiate with the Holy See the possibilities and broad strokes of a *modus vivendi* with the Russians. These negotiations stretched on due to the sensitive nature of the matter."[4] His long stay proved beneficial: when he departed for Hungary some two months later, on May 8, he carried an ID indicating that he was a representative of the Vatican Secretariat of State, and

1 Moscow is held, in certain imperial Russian doctrines, to have become the "third Rome" following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. This pseudo-religious fanaticism was subsequently utilized by the Russian Orthodox Church and Tsars as a form of legitimation for their later geopolitically motivated campaigns against the Ottoman Empire and, has provided the basis for the neo-imperial concept of "Russian world" or 'Russkiy mir' as first espoused by Patriarch Kirill (Gundyayev) in 2009.

2 Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 213.

3 Originally it was planned for him to travel by airplane with documents made out for an "Irving Smith," but the Americans were unable to secure his journey. 1 March 1946; *JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] Preliminary Report,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

4 *My journeys. Journey III.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.

was authorized by the Holy See to conduct negotiations on their behalf with his Soviet partners.[5] Fr Leiber, the Pope's personal secretary, wrote in Nagy's letter of authorization of March 18: "Father Nagy is authorized to tell his principals that the Holy See is willing to communicate with the Moscow government, if it so wishes, as the Holy See was ready to do during wartime."[6]

Nagy later deemed his mission as being "of historical value," since, so far as he knew, "this was the first authorization in writing by the Vatican to negotiate with the Soviets in Moscow."[7] This was true for Hungary, although Pius XII's cautiousness shines through in that not he, the head of the Church, had signed it, but his secretary.

The path to this potentially monumental event was arduous and the delay in Austria had foiled many of Nagy's plans. He wrote to a fellow Jesuit: "I have lost so much because of this delay, it defies estimation. [...] I could have prepared trips, I could have collected data, I could have talked to His Holiness beforehand... I won't even list all the lost opportunities. It has taken and still takes a huge mental effort to try and manage the disruption with a peaceful and happy soul."[8]

As a result and upon arriving in Rome, Nagy needed to hasten his efforts. While remarking to Kerkai after the fact about the situation on reaching Rome, he confirmed that their worst fears had been correct:

> [T]he multitude of high-ranking church officials gathered in the Vatican this February complained [to Pius XII] so much and so bitterly about the Russians, and at the same time, the Moscow press attacked the Holy See so sharply, that His Holiness almost seemed to turn away from the tactic of *modus vivendi*.[9] During those days, [...] Cardinal Mindszenty [...] told me what he had reported on the Russian situation in the Vatican,

5 *Letter of authorization of the Holy See for Töhötöm Nagy.* Vat[ikan] 18. März, 1946. abends 8 Uhr. Letter in German. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Letter 9. 2.

6 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 210–11.

7 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 210.

8 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Alszeghy.* Rome, 8 March 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/189. Letter 1. 1. Zoltán Alszeghy SJ (1915–1991) was a theologian and professor of dogmatic history at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome in 1946. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 18.

9 About Pius XII's concordat diplomacy and *modus vivendi* efforts see: Chamedes, *A Twentieth Century Crusade*, 241–48.

> and I saw how bleak his report was."[10] Continuing, he wrote that "I also found out that the Berlin Archbishop spoke in the same spirit. So much so that, according to Fr Leiber, the Holy Father wanted to commend Primate Mindszenty at a private audience for his policy of rigid opposition.[11]

To change the Pope's mind, Nagy needed to act quickly and decisively. He delivered his report on Hungary to Fr Leiber the very evening he arrived (March 3), briefly summarizing its key points while emphasizing the necessity of negotiating with the Soviets.[12] It is apparent from his addendum, written two days later, that, when it came to maneuvering, he had no illusions about the Soviet's objectives concerning Hungary. He interpreted communist policy vis-à-vis the Hungarian Catholic Church as a test of both Hungarian society and its institutions, "[t]he main goal is not only to completely discredit the Primate, incite hatred against the Church, and provoke the closing of Catholic schools, but also to gather intelligence. They want to know if the country is ready for an overt revolution." KALOT policy and *modus vivendi* seemed reasonable alternatives, since they seemed capable of "reducing tension, and getting into contact with the Russians in order to delay the direct threat and win time to prepare against even stronger measures." For this to succeed, "it would be desirable that His Eminence, Primate of Hungary, no longer provide reasons to attack his person, with emphasis on his stance concerning the monarchy issue. This way, the dialog with Stalin's representatives would be possible."[13]

Fr Leiber, in favor of both *modus vivendi* and a relationship with the Soviet Union, did not need convincing as to the appropriateness of such behavior, having talked with Nagy the previous fall about the Vatican's stance on the USSR as being determined by more than just current political considerations. The fellow Jesuit made it clear to Nagy: "[t]he deci-

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10 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 1.

11 Ibid.

12 *Supplément confidentiel à la relation du 16 février 1946 (exclusivement pour Sa Sainteté). [Confidential supplement to the report of 16 February 1946 (exclusively for His Holiness)].* [Rome] 6 mars 1946. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in French. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

13 Ibid. et passim

sive point in this entire issue is that the Holy See trusts, even takes for granted, and is preparing for the eventuality that in maybe 20–30 years, Russia will have become the largest and most blessed mission area of the Church. These are the considerations that determine the Holy See's policy towards Russia, and it is best that the Hungarians know about this."[14]

Outreach to the Orthodox Church(es) had traditionally been of great importance to the Vatican, and to the Society of Jesus in particular. However, recognition and appreciation of the specifics of Eastern Christianity independent of Rome gained new meaning with the papacy of Leo XIII (1878–1903). The Holy See revisited the topic of Russia's re-evangelization during Pope Pius XI's papacy (1922–1939) in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution (1917–1923) and the formation of the Soviet Union (1922). Thus, it is not surprising that the Jesuit-led Pontifical Oriental Institute was established in 1922, followed by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. To promote Catholic mission within the Soviet Union, the Collegium Russicum was established in 1928.

These efforts, experimental as they were, nonetheless ultimately had tragic consequences, fueling persecution of the Church by atheistic elements within the USSR while also dampening the Holy See's expectations of what could be realistically achieved.[15] Following several abortive attempts during the war, the faint hope of reaching a negotiated compromise with Moscow—as sketched for Leiber by Nagy—had again emerged in the immediate postwar period. Once again though, this shimmer of hope was jeopardized by Cardinal Mindszenty's political statements. Thus, Nagy's report, delivered on the evening of March 3, 1946, gained sudden significance, since Fr Leiber knew that Pius XII would receive Mindszenty for an audience at 11:30 the next morning—the Pope's last chance to give the Cardinal in-person instructions before his return to Hungary.[16]

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14 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 1 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. Nagy also reported Leiber's views to the SSU. 1 March 1946; *Capt. F.W. Jones's Report on Vatican Intelligence,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 40, WN 19891-19900. Fr Leiber remarked to Imre Mócsy in December 1945 that "The Church is waiting for the Russian initiative to begin diplomatic negotiations." 30 January 1946; *JZX-5924; AE5's [Streeter's] Report about the first visit of Prince Primate in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 263.

15 On this and Romanian implications see Bánkuti, *A romániai jezsuiták*, 12–20.

16 16 March 1946; *JZX-6646; Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] negotiations in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268.

Up until this point, Mindszenty believed that his course of action enjoyed papal endorsement and had no reason to assume that this would change on the eve of his departure. The scene he depicts in his *Memoirs*, as Pius XII turned to him and uttered the following words during the open consistory ceremony of his elevation to cardinal on February 21, 1946, encapsulates his beliefs: "You will be the first of the 32[17] who must take on martyrdom marked with crimson."[18]

To Mindszenty, this affirmed his course and recognition of his role. However, a timely report on Hungary, strongly suggesting the possibility of negotiating with the Soviets—while maintaining all recognition and the message of the prophetic words—could immediately alter the Pope's direct instructions, which, coming from above, would likely influence Mindszenty's subsequent behavior.

This is precisely what occurred: Leiber spoke to the Pope on the morning of March 4, and, following the audience with Mindszenty and Pius, informed Nagy that the Pope had urged the Prince Primate to be more prudent in his statements. As such, Nagy could express his relief to Kerkai, even though "[t]he Vatican's behavior towards the Russians has [...] an undercurrent of understandable fear, perhaps loathing, and hatred of bolshevism. The visceral emotions and judgment of His Holiness on the Russians are characterized by more of the same, but his great sense of responsibility overcomes these understandable primary internal views, and in his external statements he deems the search for a *modus vivendi* necessary."[19]

He then summarized the results of the action he and Leiber had executed: "[t]he next day the Primate told me somewhat bitterly, that His Holiness had asked him to refrain from any more statements, if possible, as they might worsen the situation. And the Cardinal's secretary [András Zakar – É.P.] described the facts to me this way: 'The Pope silenced the Cardinal.'"[20]

Still, Mindszenty, who was unaware of the Jesuit back-channeling that had fueled the Pope's departing remarks, did not perceive his journey to Rome with dissatisfaction. Upon his return to Hungary, he stated that he

17 Sc. During this consistory, 32 new Cardinals were appointed.
18 Mindszenty, *Emlékirataim*, 123.
19 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 1–2.
20 Ibid. 2. and 16 March 1946; *JZX-6646; Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] negotiations in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268.

continued to enjoy the Pope's full support, which both his proponents and detractors considered as true. He had met and spoken with the Pope multiple times, secured financial aid for a number of projects and purposes, and markedly influenced Pius XII's opinion on reestablishing relations between Hungary and the Holy See.[21]

In reality, however, the Vatican never possessed a consistent view as to Mindszenty. Support for him was far from unanimous, and opinions were not wholly positive among the Pope and his advisers.[22] Pius XII, not without reason, lashed out at Nagy during a private audience, citing the letter he had earlier written regarding the Cardinal: "You recommended him!"[23] Further, he characterized Mindszenty as "troppo imprudente," too imprudent.[24]

Although the Holy Father had urged Mindszenty to be more cautious in his public statements, he did accept his opinion concerning the nunciature.[25] While Mindszenty had mediated between the Hungarian government and the Vatican in the fall of 1945 supporting the re-opening, in the spring of 1946, he cautioned Pius XII against prematurely agreeing to a move that would give the country's political left an easy victory.[26] Fr Jánosi, on behalf of Zoltán Tildy, had tried to achieve a breakthrough during negotiations with the Vatican in December 1945.[27] The nunciature's reopening would have fit well with the idea of a *modus vivendi*. However, even though Jánosi reprised his role as the representative of then Presi-

21 Balogh, *Mindszenty József,* 519.

22 Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 241.

23 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 2.

24 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 259. He also reported about this to SSU: 1 March 1946; *JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] Preliminary Report,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

25 The Holy See's decision was probably influenced by a similar experience in Poland. Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 235–40.

26 Balogh, *Mindszenty József,* 519, and Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 243.

27 According to AE754 (Imre Mócsy), Jánosi arrived in Rome on December 21st 1945, and was Zoltán Tildy's personal representative. Arrival of Jánosi in Rome; Hungarian Proposals to the Vatican. Rome, 27 December 1945 and 18 January 1946, Jánosi's Negotiations in Rome; Rotta to Return as Papal Nuncio to Hungary; Jánosi's conference.with Tardini re appointment of Nuncio to Hungary. 27 December 1945; *JZX-5619; AE5's [Streeter's] Report on the arrival of Jánosi, a.k.a. Janicsek in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 261. and 18 January 1946; *JZX-5690; AE5's [Streeter's] Report on Jánosi's negotiations in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 262.

dent Tildy and Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy in 1946,[28] the Pope, in light of Mindszenty's reservations, neither allowed Angelo Rotta to resume his position as nuncio, nor did the Pontiff fill the post with anyone else.[29] By that time, views on the nuncio's possible return had already shifted in Budapest. Rotta's former secretary, Gennaro Verolino[30] later recalled: "The communist Hungarian government had the idea that there had to be a nuncio in Budapest. A Hungarian cleric spoke about this, who traveled clandestinely and very adventurously between Rome and Budapest [...] The ones who truly opposed the return of the nuncio to Budapest were the Russians, who—as the cleric mentioned earlier having heard the proposal, said: 'Then we'll have two Mindszentys instead of one!'"[31]

The "cleric mentioned earlier" is easy to identify: Nagy. According to contemporary sources, he linked the *bon mot* not to the Soviets, but to Rákosi, with its proponents including Smallholders within the coalition government and advocates of *modus vivendi*.[32] Whoever fueled Mindszenty's views about the possible return of the nuncio to Budapest, and through him, to the Vatican, the end result saw the likelihood that Nagy's diplomatic mission to the Soviets might succeed as minimal. The consolidation of relations between the USSR and the Vatican "became increasingly difficult by attributing the behavior of His Eminence the Cardinal almost entirely to His Holiness's personal instructions to the point that they're

28 Jánosi, József SJ. *Memorandum.* Part III. *Vertrouwelijke verklaringen van Presid. der Republ. TILDY en van Ministerpres. NAGY, door P.J. over te brengen aan de H. Stoel. [Confidential statements from President Tildy and Prime Minister Nagy to the Holy See].* [1946] Copies of material from the order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Dutch. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 8–10.

29 Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 243. After this, the settlement of relations between Hungary and the Holy See did not reappear on the agenda for a long time. In 1964, the issue was revisited with the conclusion of a partial agreement, however, a full settlement was not reached until after the fall of communism.

30 Gennaro Verolino (1906–2005) was a Vatican diplomat, and nuncio Angelo Rotta's secretary in Budapest between 1942 and April 1945.

31 Verolino made this point in a letter in 1997, in which he described the Budapest nunciature's efforts to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. *Gennaro Verolino's letter to John F. Morley.* In Napolitano, *Budapest igazai*, 160.

32 *Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946.).* Rome, November 12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50. 2. fol. 8. and *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso).* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950, 9.

no longer angry at the Cardinal personally, as they consider him a faithful tool in the hands of Rome."[33]

According to the Jesuits' interpretation, despite all these pitfalls, it was not unfathomable for progress to be made regarding the Soviet Union's policy vis-a-vis the Catholic Church and the Vatican. According to Fr Jánosi's assessment:

> By all indications, conditions are met. First, it seems the Russians, at least for the time being, want to avoid an open *Kulturkampf* [culture war] against the Church. There are 40 million Catholics living at this time in the territories they have practically occupied. And they have realized that the Catholic Church was different from the Russian Church both in terms of organization and resistance potential. The major Catholic parties of Western Europe are also important factors. The Russians have discovered that Christianity is not only a religion, much less just piety, it's a way of life. It is possible that in their fanaticism they think they will be able to eventually change this way of life, but they don't think the time is right just yet; they are going to need great terror for this, which they don't consider appropriate at the moment, because it would increase resistance to the extreme. If they don't yet see they are going to need ideological compromises in many respects, they have recognized their only option is slower penetration.[34]

Stalin's church policy, which was a component of the popular front strategy introduced at the end of the world war, forecast a slow transition to socialism in Hungary on tactical grounds. According to Stalin's initial estimates, this would require some 10-15 years.[35] During World War II, pragma-

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33 *Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946.).* Rome, 12 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50. 2. fol. 7–8. és *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso).* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950, 8–9.

34 Jánosi, József SJ. *Modus vivendi.* P. József Jánosi's Reports, Part V. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 11–16.

35 Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*, 47–49. "On the principle of same formation = greater security, [the Soviet Union] began to carry out the permanent revolution, i.e., the gradual construction of the Soviet system." However, Sovietization did not equate to immediate Sovieti-

tism in the Soviet Union and Soviet-occupied regions took the deep societal roots of the churches into account, successfully instrumentalized national sentiments, and turned a blind eye to how churches operated to achieve Soviet strategic and foreign policy goals. Accordingly, 1945–1946 marked only the beginning of the Soviet Union's implementation of its ecclesiastical policy. Portents of a showdown with the Church, if any, were faint in Hungary, and did not constitute an existential threat.[36] Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the 1945 election, which the Hungarian communists saw as a failure, the country's domestic environment began to alter. This saw the political and public campaign of the Left Bloc unleashed. Through the employment of 'salami tactics,' Moscow-trained Hungarian communists became more brazen, reflecting a change in the Kremlin's position.[37]

As Nagy wrote in a letter presumably addressed to Vicar General Fr Boynes, even without knowledge of the latest Hungarian political developments he did not view Soviet ecclesiastical policy as entirely positive. Instead, he identified two competing trends: The "Stalinist," which he saw as relatively complacent, and the "Molotovian," a militantly atheistic line, with considerable experience in liquidating churches.[38] He framed the goals of mission as exemplary of this dichotomy: "It appears to me that the Molotovian clique [...] is well established and has a powerful organizational framework, built on the experience of the past 25 years. I may be able to convince the Stalinist group that it is important, with regards to both their own interest and their foreign reputation, as well as overall domestic tranquility, to reach a compromise with the Church, which will yield positive benefits."[39]

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fication, but rather, adapting the countries in the region to the Soviet system on a flexible basis. Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok*, 42. See L. Balogh, *"Törvényes" megszállás*, 13–58, for a summary of the Sovietization of Hungary and the region.

36 Bánkuti, "Frontátvonulás," 411–24. This statement does not seek to overlook the atrocities and damage done to churches, but rather, that the situation prevailing after 1948 cannot be extended back to 1945–1946, as it frequently is.

37 Baráth, *A Kreml árnyékában*, 77–101. The Left Bloc was created on March 5, 1946.

38 V. M. Molotov (1890–1986) was a hardline Soviet politician, supporter of Stalin, and key figure in Soviet power structures starting from the 1920s. He served as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs from 1939, and Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union from March 15, 1946.

39 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to "Mon Révérend Père"* [likely Norbert de Boynes SJ]. [Rome] 25 avril 1946. Copies from the material of the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in French. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

This mission received not only serious attention from the Jesuits, but also the SSU, to whom Nagy had disclosed the results of his negotiations and newer objectives. One day after he arrived in Rome, on March 4, he held a meeting with "Signor Stephano" which had been arranged by Fr Mócsy, at which Streeter thoroughly debriefed Nagy on his most recent trips to Hungary and Romania.[40] Thanks to Aradi's report that had arrived in February, SSU was already aware of Nagy's negotiations with the Soviets and Béla Illés. Aradi reported that Nagy had been asked to mediate between the Vatican and the Soviet Union, and it was apparent that Illés had promised Nagy that he would inform the Soviet ambassador G. M. Pushkin,[41] who would also negotiate with Nagy.[42] In addition to this information, Nagy also told Streeter about recent developments: He had carried Mindszenty's appointment letter from the Vatican, he recounted the meeting between Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Mindszenty, and detailed the former's instructions to Mindszenty to maintain a low profile.[43]

Two months later, however, SSU X-2 in Washington voiced their concern about Nagy, noting that through him, the Vatican might be able to penetrate the young intelligence organization: "It is our belief that his [Aradi's] position in DD-land [Germany], together with his contact with AE752 [Nagy], offers the Vatican a very real opening for penetration of our organization."[44] The same report continues, noting that through Nagy "Vatican officials, including Fathers Brust and Leiber undoubtedly are aware of the use of AE752 [Nagy] by our Branch and by SI [secret intelligence, the branch of OSS and SSU to which Aradi belonged], (c) Vatican intelligence coming to us from AE752 [Nagy] must be judged accordingly." Ulti-

40 7 March 1946; *JZX-6412; The Professor Plan: AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] Itinerary and Contacts.* NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

41 Georgy Maksimovich Pushkin (1909–1963) was a Soviet diplomat, and the Soviet Union's Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Hungary between November 1945 and 1949.

42 19 February 1946; *LA-339; Kilkenny's [Zsolt Aradi's] report on negotiations for Vatican/USSR concordat,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108, B 26. Nagy never actually met Pushkin. *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 24 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

43 16 March 1946; *JZX-6646; Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] negotiations in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268.

44 *"Saint" to "BB8" [James Angleton Jr].* 22 May 1946. NARA II, RG 226, E 214, B 2, WN 21090-21105.

mately, SSU evaluated Nagy's reports and information as (indirect) messages from the Vatican.[45]

The actual intent of Vatican diplomatic overtures to the US, if such a thing existed, cannot be reconstructed from the currently extant sources: It is indeed possible that Vatican officials suspected Nagy's contacts (particularly Streeter and Aradi) of having ties to US intelligence, and further, that they readily acknowledged these when sharing information with him, knowing that it would likely find its way to Washington. At the same time, it is also not unreasonable to assume that they entirely trusted Nagy as their inside man, viewing conversations with him as confidential, privileged, and not the stuff of casual gossip.

Th information that Nagy provided was not just newsworthy, but also was more and more tied to his personal fate: The events he was experiencing signaled the state of Vatican diplomacy and the Holy See's policy towards the east. The fact that Nagy's mission was fraught with mortal danger was as readily known and accepted in the halls of the Vatican as it was in and around Washington D.C. Nagy recognized the danger he was in, but likely viewed his struggles as on behalf of the Church and part of his Jesuit vocation, and, thus, an acceptable sacrifice.

Both the Pope and Fr Leiber warned him, in paternal fashion, about his plans. When he spoke to Pius XII about his escapades, the Holy Father asked him whether he was ever afraid on his missions, to which he answered:

> I know my efforts will end in me getting caught, tortured, and executed. It comes easy with Russians. He told me smiling that I look like I could escape every time, and he didn't believe this would be the end of me. When I answered positively that I hoped for this, because I wanted to give my life to God's cause, he told me with kind reproach that this might suit me as an individual, but the interests of the Church require that I live and work, as opposed to dying.[46]

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45 The same is concluded by another summary report collecting manifold information not on Nagy's activities, but those of Leiber, as presented by Nagy: 1 March 1946; *Capt. F.W. Jones's Report on Vatican Intelligence,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 40, WN 19891-19900.

46 He also writes about Fr Leiber's warnings: "Even Leiber, the most fervent advocate of *modus vivendi* with the Russians, warned me to take every Russian promise with the utmost doubt." *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 3.

Nagy's value to SSU increased even further when he shared his long-term plan with "Signor Stephano": On behalf of the Vatican's diplomatic service, he was aiming, not only to return to Hungary, but also to travel to Moscow, "the third Rome."[47]

2.

Nagy's newest plans, however, nearly ended in disaster before they had a chance to begin. His journey, which, like his previous ones was organized by the OSS or SSU, was delayed owing to issues within the SSU.[48] Originally, one of SSU's other agents, "Dubois,"[49] was supposed to help Nagy; however, "Dubois" was stopped at Enns, along the interzonal border between the Soviet and American occupation zones in Austria, as a result of his false papers. Due to the "Enns incident," as it became known, Nagy and another Jesuit ("Jones") refused to meet with "Dubois," who subsequently "escaped" from the Soviet border guards and arrived in Rome. "Signor Stephano" respected Nagy's decision and had also been warned by Washington to delay Nagy's departure because of security considerations.[50] As a result, Nagy's return journey needed to be replanned.

Following this incident, Streeter wanted to cut the Austrian branch of SSU (specifically, Aradi) out of his agent's handling. Although he needed their facilities and assistance to physically transport Nagy to Hungary from Italy, he did not want a man he saw as his valuable agent to be questioned each time he transited Austria, given new or additional assignments, or placed in jeopardy owing to security mistakes or lapses. Thus, a seri-

47 March 16, 1946; *JZX-6646; Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] negotiations in Rome,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268. The term used in Streeter's report is "JE-land capital," with JE-land indicating the Soviet Union. Nagy was not the only Jesuit to tend towards the Soviet Union. His Croatian colleague, Stjepan Tomislav Poglajen (1906–?) embarked upon a similar mission, reaching Moscow. He shared his experience with Gretta Palmer under a pseudonym. Cf. Palmer, *Élő hit*, and his letter to Pius XII. Under the pseudonym "Kolakovic." On 29 October 1945. Archivio Storico della Pontificia Università Gregoriana (henceforth APUG), Fondo Robert Leiber, Fondo 6. Kolakovic

48 Streeter appears to have run a travel agency in the US in the 1960s. His name and address can be found in Nagy's 1963 calendar: "Mr. Stephen Streeter. President of American Tourist Association. 1180 18th Street. N.W. Washington 6." This suggests that the two remained in contact and on good terms for some time. *Pocket calendars.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

49 "Dubois" = Géza Izay SJ (1916–2008)

50 30 April 1946; *AE5's [Streeter's] report on his consultation with AE752 [Töhötöm Nagy],* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 483, WN 13714-13725.

ous conflict that had been brewing between Aradi and Streeter for nearly a year (if not longer) reached a boiling point.[51] A meeting was arranged in Rome at the beginning of May 1946, attended by Aradi and SSU Austria's Executive Officer, Robert Cunningham, on the one hand, and Streeter and James Angleton Jr. of SSU Italy on the other. Cunningham made sure that Angleton Jr. understood that SSU Austria had no plans for gathering intelligence in Italy, while Angleton Jr. expressed much the same sentiment regarding Austria. However, despite identifying the problem posed by joint control of Nagy (in Austria, he was treated as a positive intelligence agent, while in Italy, he was considered part of counterintelligence), no definitive solution was reached apart from respecting each office's territorial jurisdiction.[52] The talks, however, failed to ease Nagy's return to Hungary through Austria.[53] Eventually, on May 8, 1946, Nagy departed Rome on a flight to Vienna that Streeter had arranged, with SSU Austria organizing a ride for him from there to the Hungarian frontier. On this occasion, he was driven by a certain Otto Ploss, who actually brought him to Sopron.[54] Aradi was not in Vienna at the time, having in all likelihood remained in Rome to further sort out familial matters.

This journey created several unfortunate circumstances: First, according to Nagy's diary, since crossing into Hungary without an entry permit was a great risk, they had, on a whim, picked up a hitch-hiking Russian

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51 The issues between Aradi and Streeter can be traced back to the security concerns voiced by the latter's branch, X-2, when Aradi was first brought on to work with OSS in June of 1944. While outside the scope of this work, they can be summarized as relating to the presence of non-Americans within OSS and SSU as employees. None of Aradi's immediate supervisors, themselves US citizens, ever voiced anything but admiration for him and his work ethic, and even Angleton Jr. vouched for him in 1945. There is likely some degree of anti-Semitism (owing to Aradi's ethnic background) evident in their considerations.

52 Greater intelligence collaboration and sharing was also agreed upon, particularly regarding Vatican and Church activities. SSU Austria, through Aradi, had developed quite a sophisticated and long-range program utilizing various Catholic Church officials in Eastern and Central Europe. For a summary of the meeting, see 10 May 1946: LS-024-510, SSU-4125: Robert J. Cunningham (XO, SI) to Chief of Mission, SSU, WD Mission to Austria: Conference held in Rome on 2 May 1946, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 215, B 6, WN 26180-26199.

53 Neither Angleton nor Alfred C. Ulmer Jr. (Chief of SSU Austria) approved of Nagy's double control. At least in Italy, Angleton Jr. asserted that only Streeter contact and debrief him. March 7, 1946; *JZX-6412; The Professor Plan: AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] Itinerary and Contacts,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

54 NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 38, WN 20228.

major, so that their trip would appear as though they were simply bringing him back, rather than actually crossing into Hungary. Ploss, who did not have a Hungarian visa, remained on the Austrian side of the border, while Nagy went to the Hungarian side to search for a driver who could bring the car back to Ploss from Sopron. The bluff succeeded, as a border guard drove the car, taking the Russian major (and Nagy) to Sopron, with no one asking to see Nagy's papers.[55] Despite averting one danger, another, longer term problem that neither Nagy nor the SSU was aware of at the time arose: Ploss was apparently in the employ of the Military Political Department of the Hungarian State Police, the Katpol, and operating against SSU in Vienna.[56] He provided all of the information he had on Nagy to the Katpol: how he had brought him to the border, and that, as far as he knew, the Jesuit who frequently travelled to Rome was a "Vatican spy"[57]who was suspiciously aided by US authorities.[58] Based on the data Ploss gave, it was easy to identify the individual as Nagy, causing the noose, unnoticeably at first, to begin to tighten around him in Hungary.[59]

Nagy arrived in Budapest on May 16, 1946, equipped with his Vatican passport and Papal letter. He was ready for action and suspected nothing of the danger growing around him. For the short term, after re-adjusting to life along the Danube, he would contact the Soviets, while, in the long term, he would proceed to the Soviet Union, using his KALOT affiliation as cover.[60]

KALOT began the year of 1946 facing contradictory circumstances. Its organizational funds had largely been replenished, and work had resumed.

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55 *Diary excerpt* [Sopron] May 15, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

56 By the time a summons to KATPOL's offices arrived, Nagy was already in South America. *Summons.* Budapest, March 10, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/2.

57 SSU Washington shared this sentiment, believing him to be a member of the "Vatican Intelligence Service." 22 May 1946; *"Saint" to "Saint" and "BB8," report. "Saint" to "BB8" [James Angleton Jr],* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 214, B 2, WN 21090-21105.

58 Bare, "The curious case," 120.

59 At present, little is known about this early phase of KATPOL, but in addition to intelligence, offensive counterintelligence with a special focus on operating against western secret services, appears to have played a key role in the organization's early activities. Okváth, "Kémek," 67–92.

60 "My aim is to link a confidential Vatican assignment with the official Hungarian mission to Moscow, so there is no danger of me not returning. I will ask for approval of this journey to Moscow from the Holy See itself, which gives me cover in the eyes of the overzealous Hungarian public, while at the same time, being of great service to the Vatican." *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 27, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

However, its efforts were being seriously challenged from two directions: first, in the field of youth organizing, they were unable to reach an agreement with the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association (MADISZ). Created in February 1945, this was the Hungarian Communist Party's youth apparatus, and served as an umbrella organization for coordinating youth outreach (allegedly) irrespective of ideological or party affiliation.

Second, the issue of *modus vivendi* raised more and more questions about KALOT's role in the Catholic Church, forcing the former's leadership to explain and account for its actions with growing frequency.[61] KALOT resented the fact that it had been prohibited from participating in the inaugural conference of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) in London, in late fall of 1945,[62] with MADISZ members instead representing Hungarian youth organizations.[63] This prevented KALOT from developing international ties, which instead became their priority for 1946.[64] The Soviet Union was included among these, and relations between the Soviets and KALOT were good, as can be seen in the negotiations between Lt. Kvin of the propaganda department of the Red Army and Kerkai in early January 1946.[65] Kerkai's team agreed to continue discussions with MADISZ in order to create a consolidated youth organization. Maintaining ties to the Soviets seemed important in any event, as it offered KALOT the opportunity to prove its "democratic commitment" and that it was "not an enemy of the Russian people."[66] Eventually, as a result of multilateral negotiations, the National Council of Hungarian Youth (MIOT) was created, with KALOT among its members, but not its leaders.

Nevertheless, KALOT saw their participation as important, with Sándor Meggyesi noting on behalf of the organization's leadership that "[t]he

61 To the Actio Catholica for example. *Confidential memorandum. On the conflict between the Youth Secretariat of the A.C. and the KALOT movement concerning the discussion around MIOT.* Budapest, 18 March 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 10.

62 The inaugural conference of the WFDY was held between 19 November and 10 December 1945.

63 *Methods to approach the Russians, certain steps of ours, results so far, future unfolding.* Budapest, 5 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 7.

64 *Work program of KALOT's international department for the year 1946.* [Budapest] 14 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 4.

65 Kerkai mentioned this to "Márton," a prison informant during his arrest. *Report.* Budapest, 27 May 1952. ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-109168. 12–15. and Balogh M., *A KALOT*, 179–183.

66 *Methods to approach the Russians, certain steps of ours, results so far, future unfolding.* Budapest, 5 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 7.

tension of the current transitional situation in world politics and Hungarian domestic politics will not be resolved within a matter of weeks, in fact it may last very long indeed. And since we will continue to live in the immediate vicinity of Russia, it would be suicidal to assume constant opposition instead of being amicable neighbors on issues where it's possible to move forward together."[67]

Owing to KALOT's membership in MIOT, *modus vivendi* had been achieved on a domestic and organizational level. Upon learning of these developments, Cardinal Mindszenty saw KALOT's participation in MIOT as a manifestation of the irreconcilable differences between *modus vivendi* and his own views. His immediate reaction was to demand that Kerkai justify his actions.[68] Kerkai detailed his reasons in a letter sent in late March. In concluding the message to his former teacher, he shared his conviction that "uniformity isn't the only way to serve Catholic unity, different tactical forms set to a common goal can prove much more effective."[69] Despite his friendly tone and efforts, Mindszenty did not demonstrate any sympathy for, or understanding of, Kerkai's position. Accordingly, when Nagy arrived, Kerkai found himself embattled. [70]

This problem was exacerbated by the fact that Jesuit activities had made Provincial István Borbély's position vis-à-vis the Cardinal untenable. Arriving in Budapest from Szeged on May 21, Fr Borbély had requested a detailed report from Nagy concerning his journey to Rome, in order to learn about developments in the Vatican. Nagy remarked in his diary:

> I was very surprised by the explosively tense tempers. He was so much on the Primate's side, and interrogated me with such impatience that I couldn't finish a single sentence, since he interrupted each of them. I told him that the Holy Father had told me that the Primate is too imprudent. [...] At the end of our conversation, he strictly forbade me from

67 *Confidential memorandum. On the conflict between the Youth Secretariat of the A.C. and the KALOT movement concerning the discussion around MIOT.* Budapest, March 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 10. 3.

68 *József Mindszenty's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Esztergom, March 26, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 14. and PL, 1709/1946.

69 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Cardinal József Mindszenty.* Budapest, 31 March 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 15. 3. and PL, 1709/1946.

70 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 16, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

> relaying any unfavorable opinion to him from Rome. I am under the impression that Fr Provincial is entirely on the Primate's side emotionally. He is disposed that way intellectually as well, but since he doesn't see clearly, in fact he knows that Rome is backing us, being a true leader gets the better of him, and he leaves us to act with complete freedom.[71]

Nagy could not have known that, shortly before his arrival, Fr Borbély had been summoned by the Primate to account for Jánosi's political activities, with the Primate apparently being better informed concerning them than was his own superior.[72] This was also the exact moment that tensions had erupted between Kerkai and Mindszenty over MIOT. Even though Borbély had not been directly involved in the latter, the debate must have been uncomfortable for him, owing to the long-standing personal relationship between Kerkai and Mindszenty. Against this backdrop, Nagy arrived from Rome with unsettling news about Mindszenty. Confronted by these remarks, Fr Borbély saw his task as Provincial as to snuff out the growing conflict between members of his order and the Primate. For that reason, he carefully prepared Nagy for his upcoming audience with Mindszenty, which was to come just a few days later.

Nagy acted as the Provincial had instructed him: he handed over the letters to Mindszenty that he had brought from Rome, made remarks about several current affairs, and remained silent about topics that were not to be discussed. However, despite his best efforts, he could not dodge the Primate's question, carefully crafted owing to Mindszenty's disposition to conspiracy:

> In the end the Primate asked about how he was seen by the Vatican. "Did the Holy Father say anything specific?" I said to myself, this was the moment to tell the truth, but remembering the Fr Provincial I just said: "His Holiness expressed his hopes to me, that Your Eminence will steer the ship of the Hungarian Church wisely under the difficult conditions of the times." Not exactly "troppo imprudente!" Still, he per-

71 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 21, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

72 *Primate József Mindszenty's letter to Provincial István Borbély SJ.* Esztergom, April 11, 1946 and *István Borbély's answer to Primate József Mindszenty.* Budapest, May 1, 1946. PL, 1932/1946.

> sisted: "Was the Pope instructing me, or did he just say it to you?" When I answered that it had not been the former, he emphatically replied: "Then I shall disregard it." I have the impression that he [Mindszenty] is an extremely arrogant person.[73]

The above reveals that the tone had shifted dramatically from that which had prevailed just a few months earlier, during the fall of 1945, when Nagy had voiced his belief that he could influence the new Primate. For the moment, Mindszenty's rage was directed against Jánosi and Kerkai, both of whom had earned his wrath by acting publicly against his interests and wishes. Although Mindszenty still saw Nagy as a delivery boy to Rome, he would later begin to suspect what the courier had actually been up to, and the information he had received from Rome concerning himself and Hungary. Since his secret diplomatic mission remained unknown to the Primate, who was too distracted by Kerkai's actions, Nagy could pursue it, if only for the time being.

Nagy was informed by someone within the Smallholders' Party[74] that he should meet Boris Pavlovich Osokin if he wanted to negotiate with an influential Soviet functionary. As he learned, Osokin was the head of the Central European branch of the NKVD.[75] Officially, Osokin served as a political adviser to the Allied Control Commission, appointed by Major General Ivan Ivanovich Levushkin in February 1945, to observe the activities of Hungarian political parties and monitor the mood and political orientation of the youth and peasantry.[76] It is likely that he was already

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73 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

74 In his diary, he claims to have received Osokin's details from Béla Varga. According to the report he filed later in Rome, it was Ferenc Nagy. *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 25, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. and *Relazione dell'abboccamento col signor OSTJUKIN, capo-sezione del "NKVK" [sic!] in Europa Centrale (Budapest, il 25 maggio 1946) [Report of the meeting with Mr. OSTJUKIN, section chief of the "NKVK" [sic!] in Central Europe. Budapest, 25 May 1946].* Roma, il 2 agosto 1946. Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and Rome, 2 August 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/76. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Scatola Bianca, Pio XII. N. 1.

75 The NKVD was the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union which operated from 1934 and 1946, performing a variety of state security and intelligence tasks. Its modern successor is the Russian FSB.

76 Baráth, *A szovjet tényező*, 86. Little is known at present about Osokin. He attended military academy, was suddenly recalled from service in Hungary, and fell victim to one of Beria's purges. Zamercev, *Cserez godi*.

familiar with Nagy through both his declared administrative and undeclared security work and Nagy's role as the deputy national head of KALOT. Ultimately, the two met on May 25, 1946.[77] After reviewing Nagy's mandate from the Vatican, their conversation revolved mostly around Cardinal Mindszenty, who, for Osokin, was the Hungarian embodiment of Vatican policy. The fact that Mindszenty continued to express a common line with the Pope supported the widespread Soviet belief in ecclesiastical hierarchy, which postulated that no space existed within the system for conflicting ideas or the formation of independent opinions.

Nagy encountered some difficulty in convincing his counterpart that this idea was not accurate, since he also referenced Pius XII while communicating the Vatican's intention to negotiate with the Soviets. However, referring to the situation's ambivalent nature offered Osokin a chance to express both his doubts about the Vatican's sincerity in entering negotiations and the intolerability of a person like Mindszenty to the Soviets. He posed the rhetorical question to Nagy: "What does the Vatican want after all, and who represents the Pope's intentions: him, or the Cardinal?"

Nagy, however, parried, maintaining that the Pope did not, and could not, determine the political orientation of the high clergy. Thus, despite their seemingly close ties, the Vatican and Mindszenty were actually two different political actors. Nagy illustrated this with historical examples. Having listened intently, Osokin laughed and called him a "cunning Jesuit."[78]

But Osokin had received Nagy's message: The Vatican's aim was to approach the Soviet Union through Nagy. Adopting a more diplomatic tone, he continued their dialogue by praising the Jesuits: "He said it was always the Jesuits who adapted first to the changing times, which is why they don't think it's an accident that again it's a Jesuit traveling back and forth between Rome and Budapest."[79]

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77 See *Relazione dell'abboccamento col signor OSTJUKIN, capo-sezione del "NKVK" [sic!] in Europa Centrale (Budapest, il 25 maggio 1946) [Report of the meeting with Mr. OSTJUKIN, section chief of the "NKVK" [sic!] in Central Europe (Budapest, 25 May 1946)].* Roma, il 2 agosto 1946. Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and Rome, 2 August 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/76. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS Scatola Bianca, Pio XII. N. 1.

78 Ibid. 3.

79 Ibid. 4.

At the end of their conversation, he promised to bring the case to Moscow and to inform him of any reaction. However, that was far from all: On the very next day, Nagy received a message from Osokin asking him not to play any public role in the near future, nor to give any speeches, but to "sit tight." In Nagy's interpretation, surely "the Russians are happy to have someone mediate between them and the Holy See, and they try to keep that person above reproach in order to make use of him when it's time."[80]

To put it in perspective, he wrote: "the Soviets truly want relationships with the Holy See because of certain favorable appearances, and they don't want to start persecuting religion just yet. True, their final goals are unfavorable towards the Church, but the inner evolution of the Soviet will be complete by then, aiming to consolidate power based on Pan-Slavism as opposed to Bolshevism. This latter case would signal a positive turn for the Church."[81]

It can be inferred from knowledge of what transpired over the ensuing days that Osokin did not pursue a return to the Pan-Slavism of the Russian Empire, but rather a much more pressing matter, since he thought it best for Nagy to step out of the spotlight and remain a potential mediator between the USSR and the Vatican. Although Nagy could not fathom the exact reason, he nonetheless complied with the request and maintained a low public profile over the following weeks.

This was all the more difficult for him, as KALOT's anniversary celebrations were held on June 10 in Budapest and he would have enjoyed the opportunity to express his dedication to KALOT's members in a speech.[82] The relationship between KALOT and Mindszenty had soured owing to the MIOT affair, and a speech from Nagy might have bridged the divide. In a letter dated June 8, 1946 to the Faculty of Catholic Bishops, the Primate formally withdrew his support from KALOT, also demanding a further report explaining KALOT's activities.[83] As a result, KALOT's leadership needed to exercise caution and ensure that their public remarks

80 Ibid. 5.
81 Ibid.
82 "I didn't even make a speech at the grand assembly of KALOT on 10 June, though it would have been a very good idea." – he wrote in his report. Ibid.
83 *Primate József Mindszenty's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Esztergom, 8 June 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 19. and PL, 2991/1946.

saved face with the Primate, all the while appealing to public sentiment and guests expecting a declaration of "democratic commitment." It became apparent, however, that the gulf between these two expectations was too great, and that, despite the experiences of the "border-crossing" Jesuit, they would be impossible to bridge.[84]

Those attending the celebration two days later could report to the Cardinal that the speeches and toasts were fine from a Catholic point of view, and that Kerkai had done a particularly great job. As Fr Borbély later reported to the Jesuit Generelate in Rome: "those who participated in the celebration found nothing unusual about this and viewed Fr Kerkai's speech as manly and clear. It was a brave, Catholic speech, fit for today's times—this was the general consensus."[85]

Despite the positive performance, the Primate did not forget the MIOT affair, and became further enraged when he learned that a Soviet youth delegation of seven people had been present at the celebration along with MADISZ members.[86] Borbély remarked: "When the Cardinal found out about this, he was of the opinion that this was a sign of formal cooperation with the communists and the Russians, and it was all made to look as if the whole game were the intent of the Holy Father."[87] At the very least, "democratic commitment" had been proven, and the Komsomol delegation invited KALOT's representatives, including Nagy, to Moscow.[88] It thus seemed that Nagy had achieved his goals and would be able to travel

84 Kerkai wrote to Zsigmond Mihalovics, A.C.'s national head: "If the impossible situation of getting stuck in the crossfire hadn't arisen, we could have held the front for at least another six months." Budapest, July 18, 1946. Quoted by: Balogh, *A KALOT*, 201.

85 [Fr István Borbély István SJ]: *Kard. Mindszenty en de KALOT. (Cardinal Mindszenty and the KALOT)* [Róma] December 2, 1946. Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Dutch. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. The Dutch summary with the exact date was written on the basis of an undated, longer report from Borbély: [Fr István Borbély István SJ]: *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT.* Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127.

86 József Ugrin assessed the Komsomol delegation as being about 40 strong. In Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 209.

87 *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT.* Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 10. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127. 118.

88 A few days after the grand assembly, KALOT's leadership visited the Komsomol delegation, during which they extended the invitation to Moscow. Meggyesi, "Az út vége."

to Moscow on legitimate grounds, without raising the Cardinal's suspicions. However, KALOT's Catholic legitimacy, and, by extension, its existence, was hanging by a thread: Mindszenty demanded a new report about the organization's activities.

Kerkai told the Primate about KALOT's position in the MIOT-affair,[89] with Nagy drafting the report detailing the background for the decisions which had been made. He wrote, since according to Osokin's request, he was not to give public addresses. In fact, he took so much time and care in writing his seventeen-page report, that he personally had to ask Mindszenty for an extension of his deadline.[90] Nagy finally submitted his report on June 24, timed so that Fr Borbély was absent and ignorant of the fact.[91]

The report was a reasoned argument for *modus vivendi,* but its author made several remarks in the foreword that likely incited Mindszenty's rage: It justified KALOT's activities by noting the support that they enjoyed from Rome. Nagy confidently wrote:

> We still can't believe that His Eminence the Cardinal Primate would doubt the Jesuits' faith in the Church, a faith evidenced by special merit for the 400 years of the Order. It would cause great confusion if the appearance arose that Your Eminence doesn't trust the faith of Jesuits in the Church and in principle, since more and more people know that the same fathers enjoy the special trust of His Holiness Pope Pius XII.[92]

The memorandum then repeated arguments in favor of *modus vivendi*, deeming rigid opposition to it irresponsible and impulsive, in contrast with Nagy's own views. Nagy summarized his experiences in Rome as well, writing about the shift in world politics, the Vatican's and Americans' views, and the unlikelihood of an anticommunist third world war. The last of these, which Mindszenty was eagerly anticipating, would usher in a rapid change in the world's geopolitical constellation.

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89 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Primate József Mindszenty.* Budapest, June 22, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 23.

90 *KALOT National President [Jenő Kerkai]'s letter to Primate József Mindszenty* Budapest, June 13, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 20. and *Primate József Mindszenty's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Esztergom, June 20, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 20.

91 *Justification report.* Budapest, June 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/49.

92 Ibid. 2. et passim

As noted previously, Mindszenty based his view on Hungary's place in the world on this outcome, a path which Nagy incorrect labelled *expressis verbis*:

> First of all we must pin down the constant and only great aim, the one to consider exclusively, which is saving and serving the values of Christianity and Hungary. [...] Everything can be risked but the nation itself. And we cannot recognize a single appropriate tool. [...] A possible tactic of our times, which Hungarian Catholicism may follow, is the way of rigid opposition, total distrust, and constant secrecy. We can call this, in the noble sense of the word, the way of impulses, as it isn't based on a cold consideration of sometimes tragic, real internal and external facts, but stems from an instinctive aversion of deeply wounded souls, from the sea of bitterness of a thoroughly destroyed and humiliated country [...] One of the main characteristics of this behavior is heroic spirit and deathly resolve. [...] [I]t is reckless to follow impulses without a solid basis, and since the life of the nation is on the line, a great responsibility. I do not know who would shoulder the responsibility of pursuing a policy of rigid opposition if not in the safe knowledge that help is on its way. Without this, it is just provoking more oppression, persecution and destruction. In fact, it is the martyrial mindset of people like this that shows that even death isn't unpalatable to this method; and even if an individual has a right to seek death with a martyrial mindset, he or she has no right to lead an entire nation on this path.

Finally, Nagy detailed the key aspects of *modus vivendi* in short sentences, not unlike a creed: "In addition to rigid opposition, according to our humble view, Hungarian Catholicism is in need of modus vivendi. [...] These days, as the old proverb says: it is easy to be a hero, but hard to be wise. We should seek to become wise, as the Gospel speaks in the parable of the king, who, seeing he cannot counter twenty thousand with ten thousand, asks for peace. This is modus vivendi. A request for peace. Not making friends, not giving up principles, not submitting, but also not poking the beast with which we are locked in the same cage."[93]

93 Ibid.

Nagy's great intellectual attempt, however, failed to achieve its goal: Mindszenty broke with KALOT and Nagy. Nagy later learned from Fr Borbély that his text has been referred to as "an abomination."[94] From that time on, not only was Nagy unable to wash off the stain of being a Russophile, but also that of an upstart, as he believed himself to be the conveyor of authentic Papal intent, as opposed to the Primate.[95]

Mindszenty's rebuke was not the only reason for KALOT's demise. Its founders were aware that "no one could have earnestly believed that in majority agrarian Hungary a party aiming for total control would ignore the ideological education of agrarian youth."[96] Nonetheless, what happened was unexpected.

On June 17, 1946 on Teréz boulevard, near the Oktogon, a Soviet soldier and an officer were shot and killed. It was claimed that a KALOT membership card was found beside the body of the alleged perpetrator. The ensuing public witch hunt achieved its goal of wiping out denominational organizations.[97] Nothing about the attack has been clarified, with the perpetrator's true motivation still unknown. Even the events surrounding KALOT's exact dissolution cannot be accurately reconstructed. The consensus among Nagy's circles was that it had been a false-flag operation executed by the Hungarian communists. They contended that dissolving KALOT would not have been in the interest of the Soviets at that moment, since negotiations were ongoing and both sides were generally on good terms.[98] Nagy recorded the events similarly in his diary:

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94 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 30, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. He took the Primate's words so close to heart, that he repeated them decades later: *Data on Mindszenty's political role.* [Budapest] [around June 1971] ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 129.

95 This arose from the fact that Nagy, and not Mindszenty had been entrusted with negotiating on the topic of *modus vivendi*, of which the Primate was neither informed nor a party. In this way, the Primate believed that Nagy was attempting to undermine his authority and relationship with the Pope.

96 József Ugrin, *Reply… op. cit.* In *Bequest of Ugrin*, 24.

97 The Interior Minister, László Rajk, dissolved Catholic organizations on 22 June 1946. *Magyar Közlöny* [Hungarian gazette], June 22, 1946. no. 139 7150/1946 M. E., 7200/1946 M. E. and 7330/1946 M. E. and on the right of supervision: *Magyar Közlöny,* June 28, 1946. no. 144.

98 This view is shared by Kenez, "The Hungarian Communist Party," 881, and Balogh, *A KALOT*, 200, among others.

Béla Varga[99] nervously told me that the government received a transcript from Sviridov, the military commander[100], calling on the government to hasten the liquidation of reactionaries, especially when the Church was involved. He lists several Catholic organizations, among them, first of all KALOT, asking for their dissolution. The phrasing of the accusations against KALOT make it clear that the whole operation originated with the Hungarian communists. We soon checked, and according to our information, we're up against another trick from the Hungarian communists: they tricked the military commander into writing the transcript. István Barankovics went straight to our Russian friends, to Captain Ráth in the immediate vicinity of Ostyukin,[101] who, outraged, called the entire operation a rash act by stupid soldiers. He thinks a military commander has no right to interfere with affairs like this.[102]

Later, Fr Borbély reported along similar lines to the Curia in Rome:

The Hungarian government, at the insistence of the top Russian commander in Budapest (General Sviridov), dissolved KALOT and other Catholic organizations, because [they claimed that] they represent a grave danger to the safety of the Russian army. A few politicians in the Smallholders' Party tried to prevent the dissolution, but they failed. It happened. Immediately afterwards I was told that the Russian general decided on this under pressure from the Hungarian communists, since the communists consider KALOT to be their most dangerous enemy. I was also told that the general's zeal was rebuked by the Russian diplomatic mission to Budapest and the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. All of this is likely true.[103]

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99 Béla Varga was President of the National Assembly at that time.

100 Lieutenant General Vladimir Petrovich Sviridov (1897–1963), was deputy chairman of the Allied Control Commission.

101 = Osokin

102 *Diary excerpt* Budapest, July 3, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

103 [Fr István Borbély SJ]: *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT [Cardinal Mindszenty and the KALOT].* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 16. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127. 124.

KALOT's dissolution was irreversible and absolute, but only resulted in the creation of an ephemeral successor organization. Possessing a markedly different leadership, the Catholic Agrarian Youth Association (KAPSZ) arose in its place in August 1946.[104] The outlawing of KALOT was certainly part of the political offensive launched by the Hungarian Communist Party. It also demonstrates the change in the internal balance of power within the Kremlin. The various cliques jockeying for supremacy in Moscow can be readily identified in how the event unfolded.

On one side, Nagy negotiated with those members of the Soviet side who were more disposed to dialogue. He had been insulated from the events of June 17, possibly because his interlocutors within the Soviet occupation administration saw him as useful for future negotiations. Thanks to this intervention, Nagy, the Vatican diplomat, could remain a viable negotiating partner irrespective of what happened to KALOT. This interpretation of the multifaceted Soviet diplomatic strategy assumes good faith on their part, which requires us to accept that the responsibility for dissolving the KALOT rested squarely with Hungarian communist politicians.

KALOT's disbanding along with that of other denominational organizations suggests that the time for consensus-based diplomacy was nearing its end. Regardless of how *modus vivendi* was perceived within the Church, Nagy's chances for success could be said to be slim. Undaunted, he prepared for his next journey to Rome carrying a message from the Soviets that he felt expressed their sincere desire to negotiate further. Neither Kerkai nor Nagy could perform any function within the Society of Jesus for the time being owing to Mindszenty's intervention: The Primate explicitly commanded Fr Borbély to exact personal consequences. He wrote:

> I have repeatedly stated verbally, now I emphatically wish to tell you in writing, that you compel to obedience and force into retirement regarding the public and the press, those members of the Order, who, to the shock of many and the confusion of a wide group of Catholics, follow a hostile course, departing from and countering the official Catholic direction, shattering much-needed Catholic unity. In Debrecen, Fr Kerkai stated in front of a large crowd that [KALOT

104 Balogh *A KALOT*, 201–205.

> and the Democratic People's Party] had taken a friendly course with the invaders 'even if the Primate doesn't like this'. I have learned from other sources that—their own words—only obey the authority of the official Church in matters of faith and morality. This is an impossible thing for a Jesuit to say.[105]

This represents the definitive answer Nagy and Kerkai received to their report. Both events forced the two Jesuits to resort to stronger measures: KALOT's dissolution by decree on the pretext of the Teréz boulevard attack, and Mindszenty's withdrawal of Church support and the prohibition of further personal involvement. As such, Nagy's response, written later, becomes more understandable: "in executing [KALOT], the Cardinal worked in complete harmony with the communist party."[106] In July 1946, the emerging situation seemed far from black and white: the movement was full of vigor, its reorganization had begun, the first step toward negotiations with the Soviets had been successful, and, according to him, further progress was possible if Mindszenty could restrain his political machinations and the Pope lend more open support to *modus vivendi*. Rome must be informed of what had transpired, and Nagy wished to do this before anyone else. As he wrote in his diary: "I'll run down quickly to Rome and file a report so that his letter [sc. Mindszenty's] only arrives after mine."[107]

3.

This time it was prudent for Nagy not to travel alone. He set off with Zoltán Nyisztor, with whom he had a long-standing friendship through *Magyar*

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105 *József Mindszenty's rescript on Jesuits to the Superior.* Esztergom, July 23, 1946. PL, 3108/1946.

106 [Fr István Borbély István SJ]: *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT [Cardinal Mindszenty and the KALOT].* Copies from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 16. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127.

107 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 30, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. He did not need to fear that Mindszenty's letter would arrive before he did, or that the Holy See would take steps before he gave his own report. As András Zakar noted when discussing the events of summer 1946 in his testimony during the Mindszenty trial: "The Primate wrote a report to Rome asking for the Holy See's decision. The written answer arrived ca. two years later..." ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/2. 309.

Kultúra. Nyisztor accompanied him for a very specific reason, namely, to escape from Hungary with Nagy's help. Although organizing and departing on a journey with Nyisztor, who was already evading arrest, made leaving the country undoubtedly more complicated, Nyisztor's support left a significant impression with the Holy See in evaluating the Jesuit's conflict with the Primate: "[I]'m taking Z. along, who is greatly respected in Rome, who entirely condemns the Primate for his reckless policy. I couldn't have hoped for a more valuable witness."[108]

Nyisztor's situation had indeed become untenable in Hungary.

> He recently got out of jail where he was treated cruelly. He slept on the stone floor of the unheated bathroom, and there was a time when he thought his life would end, as he felt he was slowly freezing to death. This good man prayed throughout his long, eight-month sentence, and came back to us like a saint. It felt good to talk to him. He spoke of his tormentors in genuine Christian spirit, with forgiveness. But he wanted to flee [...] That's why he came to me. I promised him everything and talked it over with Aradi that he was to come to Vienna, and the Americans would help him to get to Rome.[109]

Reaching Vienna, however, was difficult, particularly since their smuggler was leading them on. After waiting for several days, they eventually reached Ágfalva, where they were delayed at the parish priest's owing to document controls, with a different driver. "Nyisztor was depressed, he saw the situation as being hopeless and desperate. But I was overcome by a perfect calm and a sense of security as usual in danger, and said we would reach the other side the same night."[110]

Nyisztor paid homage to Nagy in his memoirs for helping him through so many adversities, though he failed to mention the latter's calm. Instead, he remarked that Nagy would console him when problems arose by saying that emerging complications always account for the most successful operations. After the identity checks, they met some unreliable "help-

108 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 30, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.
109 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] July 4, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.
110 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] July 4, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

ers." According to Nyisztor, Nagy "started cursing like a sailor. He had a strong, folkloric lexicon that he probably picked up from fugitives and smugglers during his illegal border-crossings of the past."[111] Eventually, with the help of a man from Fertőrákos, they managed to cross to Mörbisch am See on the night of July 5, 1946.[112]

Nagy detailed the events: "[W]e reached a forest, through which the border ran. We proceeded carefully. Nyisztor kissed the last tree with tears in his eyes. He was bidding farewell to his homeland. Perhaps forever."[113] Both men would later recall this experience as a poignant moment that they had lived through together.[114]

Nagy stayed with Aradi in Vienna until mid-July and Nyisztor received papers that allowed him to continue on.[115] The two eventually both reached Rome safely: Nyisztor went "on foot,"[116] while Nagy took a considerable detour, but made better time. He boarded an American military plane that flew from Vienna to Munich, Dijon, Lyon, Marseille, Corsica before finishing its odyssey at Naples. Nagy enthusiastically recorded the fabulous views of the Alps as well as the Mediterranean. The picturesque scenes helped him, if only briefly, to forget about the issues he was facing. And there was a lot to forget, since the trip nearly began with him falling out of the plane. "During take-off, an emergency exit door fell off: I had been leaning against it a minute earlier, maybe that's why it fell off, but luckily I sat on the other side. We landed, picked up the door, and then left again."[117]

From Naples, Nagy flew to Rome, where he informed his acquaintances over the following days that he had arrived: Vicar General Fr Boynes, Assis-

111 Nyisztor, *Vallomás*, 275. It seems that an old wish of his mentioned in his diary had come true: to "pick up dialectal terms."

112 Mörbisch am See (Ger) = Fertőmeggyes (Hun)

113 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] July 4, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

114 *Töhötöm Nagy's letters to Zoltán Nyisztor.* Buenos Aires, July 7, 1948, and Buenos Aires, April 24, 1949. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letters 4. and 5.

115 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] July 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

116 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 232. Probably referring to the fact that Nyisztor had to cross the border between Austria and Italy on foot through the Alps. Adriányi and Csíky, *Nyisztor Zoltán*, 219–20.

117 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] July 18–20, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

tant General Fr Brust, Fr Leiber,[118] and "Signor Stephano."[119] His report for Pius XII was ready by July 30.[120]

This report was primarily based on the statements he had included in the document prepared for Mindszenty,[121] but accompanied by an evaluation of the conflict between the Primate and KALOT. Naturally, his account favored KALOT's side of the story, however, he was objective and even-handed in stating that "His Eminence personally behaves like a true hero, and has become the hope of the nation in such tumultuous times."[122] Given the prevailing circumstances though, he relativized this as being an improper and reckless approach to political issues: "Even if he was to achieve good results, it seems that it wouldn't satisfy him. Conversely, he aims to incite scandals with the goal of presenting Hungarian Catholicism to the world as a hero opposing an oppressive power. [...] The sheer presence of the Cardinal is an incitement to political demonstration, drawing Protestants as well as non-believers [...], i.e., the dissatisfied from all walks of life wanting to protest the current system."[123]

And since KALOT "rejected the political principle of intransigence," the Primate "seeks to destroy" it as though it were an enemy; hence the conflict between them.[124] However, KALOT saw in the policy seeking compromise a sort of opportunity to survive—he continued—which is why they entered into dialog with the Soviets. This alone did not indicate any straying from the path of Catholicism, however. To prove this,

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118 *Diary excerpts.* [Rome] July 20–29, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

119 July 16, 1946; *JRX 4227; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] report on AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] itinerary,* in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 503, WN 18388. The date of Nagy's arrival in Rome on the report does not match the date in the diary. The difference between the two sources amounts to a few days.

120 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso) [Report on the internal struggles of Hungarian Catholicism (up to and including 10 July 1946)].* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 25–45.

121 *Justification report.* Budapest, June 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/49.

122 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso) [Report on the internal struggles of Hungarian Catholicism (up to and including 10 July 1946)].* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 1. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 25.

123 Ibid., 3–4.

124 Ibid., 6.

he reported on KALOT's anniversary grand assembly and its annual activities. In expressing his opinion of Mindszenty's policy vis-à-vis that of *modus vivendi*, he remarked that "even a life sentence is preferable to a death sentence."[125] Concluding, he sought to give meaning to taking on a "life sentence" within the context of church history, assigning it to the eastern mission. This saw the Hungarian Catholic Church as an outpost of the Vatican wedged in the Slavic and Orthodox world—a bridgehead which might play a crucial future role in re-evangelizing Russia. He argued as follows:

> [F]inally the leadership of KALOT was also prompted to search for a modus vivendi by the fact that they glimpsed a great opportunity for the church in opening a promising new missionary area in Eastern Europe, and it seems to them that during possibly the second greatest mission of the history of the Church,[126] the small but deeply religious Hungarian people might play an important role as a vanguard in the sea of Orthodoxy. There are signs of this great work of global historical importance, there are preparatory, strategic steps to be taken, and KALOT has a definite mission in this, which is preparing the way.[127]

To prove this, on August 2, he provided a summary of his negotiations with Osokin.[128] He thought not only about whether his reports would convince Pius XII to continue the experiment, but also what sort of sign he might take back to Hungary to signal the validity of his mission. He suggested to Fr Leiber that, in light of KALOT's difficult situation, a papal brief would ensure that Catholic policy was truly unified and in search of consensus. Nagy even supplied a draft for such a proclamation.[129] How-

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125 Ibid., 14.

126 The Jesuit mission to China in the 16th–17th centuries was likely the "first" one.

127 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso) [Report on the internal struggles of Hungarian Catholicism (up to and including 10 July 1946)].* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 18. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 42.

128 *OSTJUKIN, capo-sezione del "NKVK" in Europa Centrale. (Budapest, il 25 maggio 1946).* Roma, il 2 agosto 1946. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

129 The text of this is only partially available in Hungarian in Nagy's book Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 235–136. The full text of the draft is available in French: *A l'occasion du*

ever, Leiber could not push this request through in such short time: "He [Leiber] told me that although His Holiness was convinced by my letter, and he condemns the rigid contrarianism of the Primate, he shied away from vindicating this in writing, i.e. condemning the Primate. He asked me how long I could wait for that letter. I said 2-3 days. He laughed. It was more like two or three months. Can we hold out for that long? I expressed my doubts."[130]

We cannot be certain whether time was the only factor that conspired against Nagy's request. In the interim, Mindszenty's letter had arrived, among others, and Nagy had to return to Hungary without a written show of support. As usual, he was assisted by the SSU, reaching Vienna on August 7th 1946 by plane. From there, his path to the Jesuit center in Budapest via Mörbisch am See and Ágfalva.[131]

Upon his return, two topics piqued his interlocutors' curiosity more than any other. The first pertained to theories about the June 17th murders and KALOT's dissolution, while the second related to how Jesuit representatives—Fr Borbély, Fr László Varga, and Fr Elemér Csávossy—could get to Rome as electors for the XXIX. *Congregatio generalis* convened by the Jesuit Superior General.[132]

Nagy had negotiated with Aradi and his superiors about how to transit the group into and out of the country, to ask for American documents, and to provide support on their journey, by speaking with parish priests at Ágfalva and Mörbisch am See. He was surprised that Fr Borbély did not await his response, instead hurrying on his own to Kőszeg. Nagy believed that he was avoiding him on purpose: Borbély had just transferred Kerkai to Veszprém, in compliance with the Primate's wishes, and was about to transfer Nagy as well. This made it inconvenient and awkward to meet Nagy in person. Undaunted, Nagy followed Borbély to Kőszeg with Varga and Csávossy. There they would need to meet, since Nagy had to hand over the fake American travel documents. After their conversation, he thought that to the Provincial Superior "not even help and support for

dixième anniversaire… [On the occasion of the 10th anniversary…]. Rome, le 5 août, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 24.

130 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] August 1, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

131 *Diary excerpts.* [no place] August 7–10, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

132 On details see Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 71.

modus vivendi people was an attractive thing," and prepared himself for whatever adverse reports Borbély might give about him in Rome.[133]

Still, whether he liked it or not, at that moment, Borbély depended on Nagy's knowledge of the area and his connections. Eventually, on August 17, he brought Borbély, Varga, and Csávossy into Austria, and Vienna where he left them in Aradi's care.[134] He returned to Budapest to ask for an explanation from Osokin regarding the status of KALOT.

Nagy needed to pull on the Soviet thread because, according to his assessment, if he achieved any result in Budapest, it would have such importance in Rome that next time he would be sure to get the papal brief in support of their activities. However, if he failed to show actual progress in his negotiations, "[i]t's possible that Rome considers my role, built on the tactic of being equals with the Russians, a fata morgana."[135]

After discussing the matter with Kerkai, he felt that he would be able to present progress to Rome with regard to two issues relating to negotiations with the Soviets: Furthering the cause of the nunciature, and his long-desired journey to Moscow.[136] He met Osokin and his fellow officers three times during the fall, either late in the evening or at night.

The first meeting was on September 6. Nagy told Osokin of his journey to Rome, the papal brief he had nearly acquired, and also discussed KALOT's dissolution, which he broached by beginning: "[e]ven the French translation of the brief was finished[137] when news of KALOT's dissolution broke, and there I stood completely humiliated, because the Russians themselves disavowed me. Beyond theoretical considerations, for the possibility of modus vivendi the existence of KALOT was a real argument. It was with KALOT that I had proved to the Vatican that it was possible to collaborate with the Russians, and they believed me because of KALOT's results."[138] He then went on to say that he considered KALOT's disbandment a failure of

133 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] August 11–12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

134 Elemér Csávossy gave his testimony relating details of the escape during a hearing at his trial in 1951. *Report.* Budapest, November 8, 1951. ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-81347. 152–153.

135 fata morgana = an optical illusion, similar to a mirage. *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] August 31, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

136 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 1, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

137 *A l'occasion du dixième anniversaire...* Rome, le 5 août, 1946. *[On the occasion of the 10th anniversary...].* OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 24.

138 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 6, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. et passim

Soviet diplomacy, which forfeited any chance of negotiating with the Vatican that his mediation might have realized. To restore trust, the Soviets would need to make concessions. Nagy also disapproved of the fact that the Sviridov-note "shot" Fr Kerkai from his place, allowing the Primate to see his policy as vindicated and his followers to increase in number.

For his part, Osokin did not offer any sort of compromise, instead reiterating the official Soviet position: A KALOT member had murdered Soviet soldiers; therefore, the organization had to be dissolved. It was a "fascist" organization anyway, since it had collaborated with the Levente movement "before liberation."[139] The Soviets had ostensibly given KALOT a chance to carve out a place for itself in the new democracy, however, it evidently still had too many "reactionary elements" among its ranks.

Nagy rejected Osokin's arguments, attempted to relativize KALOT's relationship with the Levente movement, and criticized how they had not been given an opportunity to defend themselves in regard to the Teréz boulevard attack, or to examine any of the prosecution's 'evidence'. Furthermore, Nagy argued against any insinuation that he or the organization were reactionary, highlighting their social work, as well as KALOT's aims and results. He went on to say that there would be no need to dissolve KALOT, should any of its members have been, in Osokin's words "hateful enemies of Hungarian democracy and the Russian army." Viewing the Soviet actions as an over-reaction, he brazenly continued: "The entire movement and its central leadership cannot be held to account for this, as no sane person could take you, Russian officers, to account for the many abominations committed against the Hungarian populace by individual soldiers of the Russian army."[140]

Ultimately, Nagy's own tongue did not punish him: Osokin advised him to move on, and consider that KALOT needed restructuring. What more could Nagy want? How could the Soviets better demonstrate their goodwill? Upon hearing that, Nagy pounced, offering his proposal: He asked for the nunciature to be allowed to return, to be led by G. Verolino, and to be permitted to travel to Moscow as a delegate of the Holy See. Osokin expressed no hope that the nuncio could return before peace negotia-

139 On this, see Balogh, *A KALOT*, 114–21. and the chapter *"Töhötöm Nagy and KALOT"* in this book.
140 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 6, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. et passim

tions were concluded, however, he noted Verolino's name.[141] In addition, Osokin promised to facilitate Nagy's journey to Moscow.

Nagy and Osokin's next meeting came on October 10. By then, however, Nagy was already planning his next jaunt to Rome. He and Osokin agreed that Nagy should no longer sneak across borders. Since "his safety" was of the utmost importance, Nagy would be issued a border crossing permit from the Soviets.[142] Apparently, they also took his mission seriously. At their next and final meeting, on October 18, the Soviets asked for Nagy's Vatican passport, and stamped it, confirming Nagy's belief that he "was again getting closer to the goal."[143]

While his paperwork was being finalized, Nagy could again converse with Osokin, an opportunity which he used to discuss the theoretical possibility of Soviet-Vatican rapprochement in detail. Eventually, his passport was returned, and both agreed to continue mediating between the two parties. Nagy wrote: "I was under the impression that this negotiation brought the two world views closer, since he was going to report to Moscow on the matters discussed, as was I to His Holiness."[144]

With his Soviet passport stamps, as strange as they were to him, Nagy departed legally for Rome for the first time. "The journey itself went smoothly. It was the first time I didn't have to sneak across," he wrote in his diary.[145] As he boarded the train to Győr on October 24 and exchanged pleasantries with some old ladies in his cabin, he could not fathom that he would again see Budapest only after two decades, and no longer as a man of the cloth, but as Mr. Töhötöm Nagy. For the time being, Father Nagy was going to report to the Pope, meet his American friends and interlocutors in Rome, and eagerly await the results of the Superior General elec-

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141 The issue was examined further by Fr Jánosi, who negotiated in Rome from late September 1946 on behalf of Ferenc Nagy and Zoltán Tildy. József Jánosi SJ: *Memorandum.* Part III. *Vertrouwelijke verklaringen van Presid. der Republ. TILDY en van Ministerpres. NAGY, door P. J. over te brengen aan de H. Stoel. [Confidential statements from President TILDY and Prime Minister NAGY to the Holy See].* [1946] Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Dutch. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 8–10.

142 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] October 11, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. et passim

143 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] October 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

144 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] October 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

145 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 25 October 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

tion. He hoped to return to Budapest with an apostolic brief from the Pope supporting KAPSZ, the new KALOT, before continuing to Moscow. There, on an initiative of the Pope's order, he would further his Church's cause in a distant world, hostile to his faith and culture. He considered these realistic expectations, so he traveled not only in physical comfort, but also peace of mind. Nagy enjoyed Aradi's hospitality in Vienna for several days, leaving on November 4 via his usual route: American waybill, by plane, and with the cry "Greetings, Rome, my one earthly love!" he arrived in the Eternal City on November 5.[146]

4.

Nothing would transpire as Nagy had planned. He found almost all his fellow Jesuits together: Jánosi, Mócsy, Varga and Borbély were all in Rome, while Csávossy had already left for home. They let him know that Jean-Baptiste Janssens had been elected Superior General.[147] He would usher in a new era in the history of the Society of Jesus. The influence of Fr Boynes, Brust, and Leiber waned, with the new Superior General seeking direct collaboration with the Pope. The state of emergency accompanying the war was followed by a restoration of the peacetime order.

Jánosi and Mócsy told Nagy that Jánosi had been severely rebuked for his involvement in politics and from then on was only to mediate with the approval of Mindszenty and Janssens. To them, this meant that Jánosi would never again be involved, and Nagy saw his situation as a similar one. Borbély remarked to the others that his reports were "just naïve observations of a naïve man" and "surely they won't believe that Töhi?"[148] These omens did not bode well for him. However, he did not need to wait long for firsthand confirmation of this: He met Fr Borbély on November 6, 1946, and quickly cut to the chase.

> The Primate denounced me to the Pope. He charged me with stating in a letter that His Holiness wasn't backing the Primate, but approved of the tactic of modus vivendi, and this statement was spreading in

146 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 5 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.
147 Jean-Baptiste Janssens (1889–1964) was a Belgian-born Jesuit, civil and ecclesiastical lawyer, Provincial of the Belgian Jesuit Province, and Superior General from 1946.
148 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 5 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

> Hungary through me. I was banned from operating at home, because the Society could not be in conflict with the Primate. Fr Provincial had already talked it over with Fr General, and he was only delivering the final and highest decision to me: I cannot return to my work, I could choose between Nagykapornak and Argentina. My first question was whether this was the decision of Fr General or Fr Borbély, because I would accept the General's decision, but nobody else's. I refused to be sentenced by Fr Borbély in Rome, firstly because I consider him biased, and second, because the supreme superior is here. He answered that this was Fr General's decision and that it wasn't necessary for me to talk these issues over with him, just as he had decided in Jánosi's case that he was to leave Rome in 48 hours. When I heard this, I immediately saw that there was no room for appeal, no excuses: I had failed.[149]

They aimed to clarify the situation, and it was learned that Janssens, in fact, had not even heard about Nagy's case; the decision, however, could not be modified: Nagy was assigned to Uruguay.[150] He presented his final report on the situation in Hungary on November 12, 1946, which in essence consisted of a few polite comments, followed by a 14-page critique of Mindszenty's attitude as Hungary's top cleric, and political and church actor.[151]

This would be Nagy's last word on *modus vivendi*, on Hungarian Jesuits, and in the Vatican's diplomatic service. He never again contemplated the issue of Soviet-Vatican rapprochement, likely owing to the upsetting and dramatic meetings and conversations. He would wonder how his Russian friends were going to see his disappearance, but he had to banish any former ideas from his mind as "futures past." It seemed that "the third Rome" had dissolved before his eyes like a *fata morgana*.[152]

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149 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] November 5, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

150 *Diary excerpts.* [Rome] November 5–12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

151 *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso) [Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)].* Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and *Jelentés a magyar katolicizmus helyzetéről (1946. november 5-ig bezárólag) [Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)].* OSZK Kt., f. 216/50.

152 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] November 6, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. And about Jánosi's retreat see his report to Robert Leiber on January 8, 1947. Situation in Ungarn. APUG, Fondo Robert Leiber SJ, Fondo 12. Diversi Memoranda sulla situazione politica dopo la II. guerra mondiale

VI.

South America—Another Life

"Because of the reasons stated in Jesuits and Freemasons, both enterprises—KALOT and rapprochement—failed. Fr Kerkai was imprisoned due to the not-always-thought-through fever and the 'momentum' of great changes common to all times—I was sent into exile by the church that is willing to coldly sacrifice even their most faithful men."[1]

1.

With great caution, Provincial Superior István Borbély attempted to cautiously defuse the conflict between Cardinal Mindszenty and the Jesuits:[2] Father Jánosi was assigned to Mezőkövesd, and Kerkai to Kaposvár.[3] However, as far as Nagy was concerned, there was no compromise. In the autumn of 1946, Mindszenty personally stipulated that Nagy could not remain in Hungary.[4] This meant that he was briefly unable even to return to Hungary from Rome. According to Nagy's later recollections, Fr Borbély

1 *Report.* Budapest, 16 August 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 23–24.

2 He informed the Superior General about the reasons for his decision. *Stephanus Borbély SJ's letter to Superior General Jean-Baptiste Janssens.* Romae, die 10. novembris, 1946. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Latin. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Praepositi Provincialis Provinciae Hungariae, 1929–1948.

3 Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 42–43.

4 In the words of József Vid SJ, heard later in December 1948 during the Mindszenty-trial, the decision had been made owing to: "the Primate's wish that two individuals (Töhötöm Nagy and József Jánosi) do not return to Hungary owing to their violation of the Church's politics. This meant that they wanted to compromise with the democratic government and performed actions to this end." *Interrogation report of the suspect Fr József Vid.* Budapest, 14 December 1948. ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/4. 199.

summed up the matter to him by stating that "a priest cannot be right against a cardinal."[5]

To avoid similar cases, in 1948 Assistant van Gestel found it necessary to issue guidelines for members of the Hungarian Jesuit Province, reaffirming the ban on politics, especially when antagonistic to the Cardinal's authority. This specifically forbade members of the Order from involving themselves in politics:

> [...] 3. Governance of the so-called 'church policy' concerns only the hierarchy, i.e. bishops acting individually or collectively. None of our men should meddle in the affairs of Church governance in that region. 4. In addition, they must faithfully avoid disobeying or contradicting the Cardinal Primate or any other bishop; also deciding an argument arisen almost always under very severe conditions, favoring a single side.[6]

Although perhaps overly cautious, these instructions might have signaled that the Jesuit Order was striking a safer path forward in light of deteriorating church political and domestic situations. Nagy, however, never saw his relocation as anything other than forced exile and the product of Mindszenty's revenge. In November 1946, he reported this to Kerkai in several letters, writing in the last of these:

> Dear Father! My case is closed. I have been beheaded and my head sent to the Primate in atonement. His Eminence shall be satisfied. I got him the Primate's chair in Esztergom with the crimson of honor; in return he got me a menial job in Uruguay with the flush of shame. I cannot even be angry at him, for he knows not what he does. I am leaving our small country now, and, according to the current assignment shall never return. [...] Dear Father! I bid you farewell. It is the plain truth

5 He wrote about this after leaving the Hungarian Freemasons in Argentina in 1967, comparing it to the conflict with Mindszenty 20 years earlier. OSZK Kt., f. 216/127. 3. and *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 14 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

6 *Instructio data ad Praepositum Provinciae Hungariae [Instruction given to the Provincial Superior of Hungary].* Rome, February 10, 1948. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Latin. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

> I am writing: there is nothing that I regret more than the fact that we shan't work together again. So many tough and intricate struggles we've been through together. So many difficulties shoulder to shoulder. And the secret of our success—apart from the Order of grace—is that there were two of us. [...] Joseph was sold by his brothers... [7]

Later, while recharting his life's course, Nagy continued: "I'll organize a KALOT in the Spanish-speaking world!" To Kerkai, he concluded by offering: "If it becomes too dark at home for you too, come follow me, and we'll found new Jesuit mission teams!"[8] However, Kerkai's life dramatically diverged from Nagy's, with the former unable to avoid imprisonment,[9] a fate that would have likely befallen Nagy as well had he returned to Hungary in the late 1940s.[10] Nagy could not have been aware of this half a world away in South America, with his new challenges instead consisting of obedience to the Jesuit Superior General, processing what had transpired, and returning to the rhythm of work.

2.

Nagy first settled in Uruguay, where he became spiritual director at the diocesan seminary of Montevideo. While learning Spanish, he taught sociology and divinity.[11] His first impressions are colorful and optimistic:

> In Europe, especially in such a remote little country as ours, we have entirely false conceptions of South America. It is seen as a backwards, semi-barbaric region. In fact, there is actual adoration for North America here, and they copy the yankis [sic!] at extraordinary speed. Not only do they let in every North American industrial product almost duty free, which is why there are as many beautiful cars here as anywhere, but Buenos Aires, Montevideo and all other major cities are

7 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Rome, November 27, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 4.
8 Ibid.
9 Cseszka, "Jezsuita életút," and Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 96–98.
10 A summons which arrived in absentia to his Budapest address on March 10, 1947 from the Hungarian State Police's State Defense Department. See *Summons.* Budapest, March 10, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/2.
11 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, March 19, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 6. 6–7.

> slowly becoming just like any North American metropolis. Fifty-sixty story high skyscrapers can be seen lined up next to each other.[12] [...] In Buenos Aires, for example, there are such modern and magnificent subway trains as in Berlin, with escalators conveying the masses above and below.[13]

Nagy was also struck by the natural beauty of the continent:

> Our seminary stands among huge palm trees, with fragrant eucalyptus trees growing in front of it. Their scent is truly marvelous, and they almost stretch to the clouds. Mountains are 6,000 meters high here, and there are several cities situated above 4,000 meters. [...] Everything is so large. The Rio de la Plata (Plata river), for example, is over 200 kilometers wide. On the map, it looks like a deep bay, however, it isn't a sea, but a river, and it flows at a considerable speed, as half of South America's water supply runs through it.[14]

At first, Nagy's letters to his fellow Jesuits exuded optimism, even concerning his work. Tales of KALOT's achievements excited the Uruguayan seminarists, and Nagy reported on this admiration in several letters.[15] His previous results were known owing to the recommendations that Rome had sent prior to his arrival, and there was an expectation that more of the same could be expected once he had settled in his new home: "The theologians have gone wild, and the teaching staff is becoming rebellious, since nothing interests them [theology students – É.P.] apart from the social issue and organizing."[16]

It followed almost naturally that, in addition to all his other jobs, Nagy would organize a social movement in Uruguay modeled on KALOT.

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12 This is an exaggeration: At the time, the tallest building in South America stood in Argentina: Edificio Kavanagh (Kavanagh Building) in Buenos Aires. It had been inaugurated in 1936, was 31 stories tall (120 meters), and the only 'skyscraper' on the continent for a long period.

13 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, March 19, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 6. 2.

14 Ibid. 4.

15 *Töhötöm Nagy's letters to Jenő Kerkai* OSZK Kt., f. 216/236.

16 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai* Montevideo, March 19, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 6. 8.

To this end, he planned a Catholic agrarian youth organization, *Juventud Agraria Católica* [JAC], with interested theology students.[17] To his fellow Hungarian Jesuits, he wrote that "Our realistic and all-encompassing programs were a revelation to them."[18] His new experiences reinforced these positive first impressions of South America, causing him to believe even more in the movement's necessity:

> I have grown to like this people very much. They are very, very forlorn, and their history is full of suffering and struggles. Here, the poor griojos [sic!] live completely at the mercy of the owners of the infinitely large farms. There are gigantic cattle farms here, based on extensive husbandry. The animals graze by the tens of thousands without stables, herded and milked by South American cowboys for the huge dairy farms. No rights or legal protection are afforded these poor devils. [...] On the other hand, the Church hasn't gotten beyond organizing processions. [...] The tone I speak is completely new to them, and truly shakes them up. They are amazed, does the Church care about them after all?! They are positively thirsty for my words, even though my Spanish is awful...[19]

The temporary language barrier was overcome by the desire to make a difference, and Nagy found enthusiastic collaborators among his young fellow Jesuits. When organizing the JAC, he was therefore justified in believing that every precondition for the movement's success had been met, and that he could make a fresh start as well. A program, including a detailed strategy for growing the movement and winning over individuals, was prepared. A professional staff would be hired who were to devote their energies solely to organizational work. He himself asked to be relieved of his spiritual duties so that he could concentrate solely on

17 *Pro memoria on the JAC movement to be started.* Documents in Spanish and Hungarian. Montevideo, August 15, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/94. and f. 216/95. Its Spanish version is also available at the Archive of the Argentinian-Uruguayan Province of the Society of Jesus in Buenos Aires. Files of P. Alexander Töhötöm Nagy (without ref. number).

18 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to young Hungarian Jesuits.* Montevideo, 10 June 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/272. 2.

19 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to young Hungarian Jesuits.* Montevideo, 10 June 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/272. 3–4.

the movement. In his mind's eye, he imagined an organization centered in Montevideo and covering all of Latin America.[20] Even a budget, calling for $3,500, was drawn up for the first semester.[21] All that was needed was the permission of the Archbishop of Montevideo.

The problems began when, as he later wrote "...it became clear that this wasn't going to be a spiritual movement, and we weren't going to fill the empty churches with young people."[22] The Archbishop of Montevideo did not approve of their venture and, therefore, the movement was unable to begin its activities. Archbishop Barbieri[23] said at their meeting that organizing the masses required a Communist approach and something that the Church would not engage in. He offered, instead, to have Nagy teach catechism within the already established Catholic associations and frameworks. Only after religious life had been re-established, and pending the Archbishop's approval, could the next step as to the social issue be taken.[24]

Following this rejection, Nagy was understandably upset. The first with whom he shared his emotions was again Kerkai: "There is one thing I am permitted to do with workers in this country: teach them catechism. A couple of Negroes and Mestizoes will come, the rest spit on the street when they see a priest. And take this literally, my dear Father..."[25] Neither did he conceal his anger when he later wrote to his younger confreres: "For three hours straight the Archbishop told me things that almost made me fall out of my chair. Never in my life have I talked to such a stupid, narrow-minded, intellectual midget. Here it is again: stupid, narrow-minded, intellectual midget. He shut the entire movement down."[26]

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20 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to István Borbély.* Montevideo, September 6, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/267. Letter 3.

21 *Detailed plans and conditions to start the JAC.* [Montevideo], September 12, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/96. and f. 216/97. and *El movimento de la Juventud Agraria Católica Húngara – El P. Alejandro Töhötöm Nagy SJ, nos hace interesantes manifestaciones*. Archive of the Argentinian-Uruguayan Province of the Society of Jesus in Buenos Aires. Files of P. Alexander Töhötöm Nagy (without ref. number)

22 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, August 18, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 12. 2.

23 Antonio María Barbieri (1892–1979) was a Capuchin father and the Archbishop of Montevideo from 1940.

24 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, November 8, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 14.

25 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, September 17, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 13. 1.

26 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Hungarian Jesuits.* Montevideo, October 1, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/201. 2.

Thus, while Nagy's popularity among his fellow priests and seminarians rose, his room to maneuver grew smaller. This new clash with the hierarchy exacerbated the trauma of his relocation to South America. He grew tired of his lonely struggles, often seeing them as entirely unnecessary: "I sit at the window overlooking the city"—he wrote in his diary melancholically. "That's where true, honest life is, I feel. There, even when people play roles, they don't preach the opposite. There, if the strong oppresses the poor it's because that is what the Gospel of the World prescribes, not like us in the Church, where we walk within the separate framework of secular life with the Gospel of the Lord in our hands. That external struggle is more honest, because it isn't pharisaic. [...] That life is more raw, more honest. It beckons me, it calls me irresistibly."[27]

Every new development seemed only to reinforce Nagy's growing sense of hopelessness and despair, as he lamented to Kerkai: "I don't see a way out anymore. Everything inside me is shaken to the core."[28] The next disappointment followed quickly thereafter:

> I have just performed my annual spiritual exercise at the Larraniaga [sic!][29] novitiate which also functions as a spiritual retreat. A huge car with a speaker appeared every day at 5 pm, and until 8, it boomed its message and music all over the neighborhood, proclaiming the necessity of land reform, just wages for day laborers, humane treatment, and a triumph for the communists. Appearing at the same time in the garden of our house were no more than eight to ten old bell ringers and parish prayer leaders on spiritual retreat from the countryside singing the Via Crucis in a eunuch's voice, with buckling knees. I held on to the iron bars of my windows like a tiger locked in a cage, and listened in the throes of helpless rage, how communism preaches the word of God instead of us, and what a weak little display of sanctimoniousness we have made of the greatest of truths, and the religion of the bravest acts.[30]

27 *Diary excerpt* Montevideo, 21 November 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. 7. fol.
28 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, November 8, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 14. 4.
29 Larrañaga was the location of a Jesuit Novitiate and spiritual retreat.
30 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, 7 December 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 15. 1.

Confronted with a situation he perceived as being more and more hopeless, Nagy shared ominous, and perhaps vindicated, predictions with Kerkai: "In fifty years, when the Church stands with the workers, where it's safer, more in line with the Zeitgeist, they will dig up our memories, referring to us how 'we, the Church' had been doing this, how it had been initiated by such and such fifty years ago, and then I shall turn in my grave."[31]

In his letter to Kerkai, Nagy then confessed that he had grown disillusioned with the Church and was thinking about leaving. Kerkai, in reply, made efforts to handle Nagy's professional/personal crisis, trying to keep his friend's spirits up and to protect him: "Don't jump blindly into midnight darkness for the world."[32] But he was correct in believing that, from afar, his words offered little help. For that reason, he stopped waiting for more bad news to arrive from Nagy and secretly traveled to Rome in February 1948, as he had heard that Nagy was staying "somewhere in Europe."[33] Writing to Nagy later, after realizing his mistake, he said "I thought that you must mean Rome, where you would decide about your own life and death. I didn't want to be absent from this occasion."

At that moment, however, Nagy could not have been further from Europe, with his external and internal struggles driving him to seek refuge in the Pampas.[34] "As I wrote earlier, you turning left would inflict such a wound on me, that I almost wouldn't be able to recover anymore." Kerkai later confessed in the same letter, as he referenced the impact of Nagy's life and situation upon himself. Kerkai mentioned Nagy's sister, who would be as deeply shaken by such a decision, as well, to say nothing of their former KALOT collaborators: "Just think, the memory of Father Töhi lives in the souls of Meggyesi, Szabados, and other hard-working heroes, as a dynamic idea that used to walk the Earth in a physical form.

31 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, 17 September 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 13.

32 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Budapest, 25 December 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365. Letter 21. 3.

33 Kerkai did indeed visit Rome from January–February 1948, officially to prepare László Bánáss' journey to Rome and for negotiations at the Vatican. Takáts, *Dr. Takáts Ágoston visszaemlékezése*, 84.

34 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Rome, 11 February 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365. Letter 22. 1.

Now, if these people were to hear Father Töhi has not succumbed to heroic death, but a form of suicide! [...] The very thought is horrifying!"[35]

Ultimately, it was not the thought of geographically distant friends and colleagues that gave Nagy strength, but acceptance of his reality and hard, manual labor. In the face of church ministry which he progressively saw as growing ever more hollow, Nagy wrote on January 28, 1948: "I get chills when I dress for mass. It's unbearable. A dishonest man might do it, but I can't dress up in fancy clothes and move between the altars, when I see no point to it!"[36] Despite this, a month later he was working hard: "I visited all sorts of farms. I've been to a smallholding outside the capital, I've been to dairy farms further away, and I went for almost two weeks to the large holdings of the infinite Pampas, where they raise cattle and sheep on 10,000 acres with 3–4 peóns (they're like the cowboys of North America). I have gained a considerable amount of experience. I went to work myself. I traversed the seemingly infinite land without a cassock, in peón's clothes, on horseback, I got sunburned black, I herded cattle, I worked with sheep, and I got to know the reclusive people there. I know their problems, their complaints, their desires."[37]

While becoming acquainted with landowners, peasants, and craftsmen, Nagy familiarized himself with the ins and outs of farming. In summarizing what he had experienced for Kerkai, he remarked "So you can see, Father, my every constraint and utter despair notwithstanding, I have not been staring at the clouds."[38] Physical labor offered him stability just as everything else grew uncertain, as he wrote to Kerkai, then searching for him in Rome:

> This is my situation now vis à vis the Church and Catholicism: [...] I am powerless to go on. I consider it a lack of character, I despise myself for it. So, my inner pillars collapse. [...] [I]'m still trying to procrastinate, because I really hope that I'll go mad, and that they transport me to

35 Ibid. 5.
36 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, January 28, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 18. 3.
37 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, February 27, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 19. 1.
38 Ibid. 3.

> a closed institution, and my life's problems will be solved. Thank God: I have gone mad!! This is what I'm hoping for, or the miracle of my faith returning one fine day. But if neither happens, I just can't hold out much longer. I'll take up day labor, but I cannot stay in the Order.[39]

Returning to Montevideo from the countryside, Nagy was again confronted by the reality of being unable to realize several ideas which he had developed. After giving a talk, someone reported him to Archbishop Barbieri, who in turn asked the Jesuit Provincial to warn "restless" Nagy against discussing social issues with such candor.[40] For this reason, it is not particularly surprising that, when he was invited to give a talk in Argentina in March 1948, he was more than happy to oblige his hosts.

The change in scenery boosted his spirits, and he began work optimistically at San Miguel outside Buenos Aires,[41] where he taught sociology, before he taught pastoral practice at the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology of the Collegium Maximum.[42] "Now I incite here in Argentina," he joyfully wrote to Ibolya Csipkó[43] in Hungary, a former KALOT colleague. He broadly described his new job: "I'm holding a social course for young Jesuits, there are 170 of them in a large, central college."[44] However, in Argentina too, he was caught in "a despairing downward spiral, vulgarization [...] and 'ecclesiastical reign of terror'."[45] As if his life were repeating itself, he again captivated the seminary, but found substantive work impeded by the Archbishop.

In June 1948, Nagy was invited to Chile for a series of talks, which he eventually gave, if only to escape his present situation. This only succeeded in delaying, but not changing, his final decision to seek dismissal from the Society of Jesus.[46]

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39 Ibid. 5.
40 Ibid. 3.
41 Colegio Máximo de San José
42 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai* Buenos Aires, 9 April 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 21. 1.
43 Ibolya Csipkó (1919–1997) was the secretary of KALOT's journal *Magyar Vetés [Hungarian Crop]*
44 *Letter to Ibolya Csipkó.* Buenos Aires,June 3, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/214. Letter 2. 1.
45 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Buenos Aires, April 9, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 21. 1.
46 He first mentioned dismissal with Kerkai in his letter dated May 20th 1948. *Nagy Töhötöm levele Kerkai Jenőhöz.* Montevideo, 20 May 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 22. 1.

Nagy had been invited to Chile by Luis Alberto Hurtado, a fellow Jesuit who made invaluable contributions to the social apostolate and was recently canonized.[47] Returning to the 1940s, Hurtado and other members of the Chilean Jesuit Province were seen as radicals, since their social ideas were considered fundamentally different from those of the mainstream Church in Chile. The political implications of their work, caring for the poor and preaching to workers, put them at odds with the conservative Chilean clergy. In Nagy, they saw a brother and invited him to speak.[48]

According to Nagy, Hurtado fetched him from the airport in Santiago and showed him around the city.[49] In the letters he wrote about his experiences among the Chilean Jesuits, Nagy paints a vivid picture of what he witnessed in Santiago. Instead of sightseeing, his hosts gave him a tour of the "wounds of society:" slums, the hopelessness of the proletariat, the hungry, and impoverished children everywhere.

During the series of talks that he gave, Nagy tried to convince his audience of the necessity of social work, despite its difficulties. He noted how the aristocracy had lost their status with the advance of communism in the postwar period, using Hungary as an appropriate analogy for Chile. However, Nagy himself did not believe in the viability of a Catholic movement, due in part to the social insensitivity of the Chilean aristocracy, but also the mentality of the Chilean people, whom he saw as being incapable of both supporting it and working hard.[50]

Nagy returned to Uruguay from his tour in August 1948 and learned that the Archbishop of Montevideo had brought his movement to a complete standstill. The Archbishop of Buenos Aires prohibited him from teaching, owing to his activities at the Jesuit college of Buenos Aires. The circle had closed. Embedded in a life narrative, he connected his negative experience in South America with his leaving Hungary in yet another letter to Kerkai: "[a]nd what am I doing here in this sad province? First, I state that sending me here after such a kick and disappointment to get

47 Saint Alberto Hurtado was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. His letters to Nagy can be found in: OSZK Kt., f. 216/349.

48 On the activities of the Jesuits in Chile see Schnoor, *Gehorchen und Gestalten*. The book has been reviewed in Hungarian by Bánkuti: *Engedelmeskedni és alkotni*.

49 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 286.

50 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Buenos Aires, May 31, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 23.

straight was the worst possible idea. Here, even if there's nothing wrong with you, you fall sick, and I—as you know well, Father—have always struggled with my faith, I could but lose all respect I still had left for the clergy. However, with stubborn persistence, I continued on the path I saw best. As a seed, Father had written in a letter, I tried to make my way in the jungle."[51]

To avoid an even larger scandal, Nagy asked Kerkai to keep things secret at home for as long as possible.[52] The Provincial supported his request and forwarded it to the General of the Jesuit Order, although he hoped Nagy would change his mind. There was talk about transferring Nagy to the Chilean Jesuit Province to work directly with Hurtado.[53] Nagy rejected the offer.[54]

Nagy wrote to his younger sister about the series of events:

> Yes, I have decided to leave the Order and the Church. It's not a farewell in rage, the Order lets me go in peace, and Fr General loves me so much, maybe like Fr Kerkai, that he's getting me the favor from the Holy See to relocate to lay life. [...] You know, Little Sister, the real souls in the Church blessed (or cursed!!) with tension and critical attitude, are almost all in their death throes, but they persevere, because these difficulties usually only mature at an older age, that's when one sees them for what they are, and few have the courage at that age to start a new life, to leave the protection afforded by the walls of the Order, the good food, the fixed bed, and to set out on the road of new horizons. [...] Fr Kerkai is unique: he's a fanatical voluntarist, who overcomes everything with his iron will, and distinguishes things for him-

51 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Buenos Aires, August 5, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 26. 2.

52 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Montevideo, May 20, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 22. 1.

53 *Correspondence between Argentinian Provincial Juan Marcos Moglia and Chilean Provincial Alvaro Lavín.* Documents in Spanish. Santiago de Chile, September 17, 1948. and Buenos Aires, September 29, 1948. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Latin. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Generalis, 1943–1949. Janssens informed Nagy of the correspondence. *Jean-Baptiste Janssens SJ's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Róma, September 29, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/362. Letter 9.

54 *Ad casum P. Alexandri Nagy [On the case of Fr Alexander Nagy].* Rome, October 24, 1948. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Latin. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Generalis, 1943–1949.

self with a certain saintly optimism, saying the works of man and God are so intertwined, that it's difficult to set them apart.[55]

Eventually, the Pope granted Nagy lay status (*reductio ad statum laicalem*).[56] According to the dismissal procedure, Nagy did not cease to be a Jesuit, but became a lay person: he did not need to celebrate mass daily or wear a cassock, and could get married.

3.

Thus Nagy, having spent 22 years in the Jesuit Order, embarked upon a new life in late 1948. He would spend this next phase in South America, with Argentina as his home until he returned to Hungary in 1968.

For much of the twentieth century, Argentina was characterized by economic and political turmoil, including the years that Nagy spent in Buenos Aires. In 1948, when Nagy left the Society of Jesus, Juan Domingo Perón had been president of the country for two years.[57] Peronism markedly defined Argentine history, even after Perón's several presidential terms, as different political forces, including military coups d'état, brought anti-Peronist politicians to power.[58] This was the case with the Lonardi,[59] Aramburu,[60] and Frondizi[61] governments, which followed Perón (between 1955 and 1962), as well as during the Illia[62] (1963–1966), and General Onganía,[63] presidencies which, in 1973—that is, after Nagy left the country—witnessed Perón's brief return.

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55 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Nagy Erzsébet, Mrs Lajos Bihary.* Montevideo, May 7, 1948. MNL NL, XIII. 30. *Documents of the Bihary Family.*

56 OSZK Kt., f. 216/88. and his farewell letter to Provincial Borbély: Buenos Aires, December 15, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/267. Letter 8.

57 Juan Domingo Perón (1895–1974) was an Argentine military officer and politician. He served as President of Argentina for three terms: 1946–1952, 1952–1955, and 1973–1974.

58 Hevesi, *A peronizmus*.

59 Eduardo Ernesto Lonardi Doucet (1896–1956) was an Argentine military officer and President of Argentina for a short period in 1955.

60 Pedro Eugenio Aramburu Silveti (1903–1970) was an Argentine military officer and President of Argentina between 1955–1958.

61 Arturo Frondizi Ercoli (1908–1995) was an Argentine lawyer and politician. He was President of Argentina between 1958–1962.

62 Arturo Umberto Illia Francesconi (1900–1983) was an Argentine physician and politician, and President of Argentina between 1963–1966.

63 Juan Carlos Onganía (1914–1995) was an Argentine military officer, dictator, and President of Argentina between 1966–1970.

The turbulent political situation may have influenced Nagy's outlook, as he encountered Argentina's Hungarian expat community following his departure from the Jesuit Order. His life within (or better, apart from) it was fundamentally determined by the country's relationship towards immigrants.[64] The Hungarian colony in Argentina grew substantially from 1947–1948 as Perón's first five-year plan (*Primer Plan Quinquenal*) of 1946 allowed 50,000 immigrants to enter per year, including Hungarians stranded in Central European refugee camps.[65] With this influx, a group of markedly anticommunist and right-wing individuals joined the community that already existed in Argentina, and dramatically changed its character.[66]

For centuries, European migrants, particularly from Spain, France, and Italy, had flocked to Argentina. During this period, Hungarians and Germans joined them in greater numbers. In fact, the first Hungarians to arrive in the country had been Jesuits. In the summer of 1717, 230 years before Nagy arrived, Zsigmond Asperger, a Jesuit physician who was Hungarian according to some, Austrian according to others, came to the Paraguayan Jesuit Province covering modern-day Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Southern Brazil.[67] Fr Ferenc Limp[68] and Fr László Orosz,[69] contemporaries of Asperger, arrived in 1726, and were verifiably Hungarian, signaling the steady inflow of Hungarian Jesuits to the great South American Jesuit mission.[70]

Many Hungarian migrants—corresponding to the waves of European migration—arrived in Argentina beginning at the end of the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, significant Hungarian colonies had formed across the country, among them in Buenos Aires, the growing capital. The rate of immigration rose an order of magnitude again after World War I, due to the introduction of restrictions in US immigration

64 Némethy Kesserű, *"Szabadságom lett a börtönöm,"* 13–15.
65 Ibid. 29–30.
66 This included government officials, minor politicians, soldiers, gendarmes, and those affiliated with the Arrow Cross regime. The number of civilians and their families simply fleeing the Red Army was also significant. Szabó, "Fellazítási politika," 194–95.
67 Zsigmond Asperger (Sigismund Asperger) SJ (1667–1772) was a Jesuit, physician, and missionary to South America.
68 Ferenc X. Limp SJ (1696–1769), was a Jesuit and missionary to South America.
69 László Orosz SJ (1697–1773) was a Jesuit and missionary to South America.
70 Torbágyi, *Magyarok Latin-Amerikában*, 78–79.

policy.[71] Beginning in the 1920s, expats from the successor states of Hungary, especially those whom the then strict Argentine immigration laws would not have otherwise admitted, approached Argentina through Uruguay and waited in Montevideo while their cases were decided. The phenomenon was recognized as early as 1942: "It can be stated as a rule that on average every third Hungarian in Argentina will have stayed in Montevideo for some time before arrival."[72] It was through Uruguay that the family of Paulina Pölöskey, Nagy's future wife who also hailed from Transylvania, came to Buenos Aires in 1934.[73]

From the end of World War I onward, the cultural and organizational life of the Hungarian colony in Argentina began to diverge from the legacy of Austria-Hungary. This witnessed the quick development of church-founded charity, spiritual and cultural organizations, as well as civic Hungarian organizations, choirs, theater groups, and sport clubs. Despite the greater difficulty owing to the community's geographic dispersal and the country's size, Hungarian schools began to sprout up. Migrants arriving after World War II, referred to as "forty-eighters" owing to the date of their arrival, actually belonged to the 1945 emigration wave, joined these institutions, but also founded several new Hungarian centers. Of special significance among them is the *Centro Húngaro* (1948), the Péter Pázmány Free University, and the Mindszenty Hungarian Academy of Science and Culture which from 1950 operated within it.[74]

Nagy's participation in Buenos Aires' lively Hungarian cultural and organizational life cannot be sufficiently documented using his Hungarian estate. A letter to Nyisztor that he wrote just after leaving the Society of Jesus strongly suggests that he was not particularly involved with it: "I have no contact whatsoever with Hungarians. I don't want to be discovered, I don't want to offend anyone."[75] This never really changed, and

71 On this see Puskás, *Kivándorló magyarok*, 165.

72 Torbágyi, *Magyarok Latin-Amerikában*, 95, quotes *Magyarok Dél-Amerikában [Hungarians in South America]* by Elemér Miklós and Andor Vér published in 1942 in Buenos Aires.

73 Paulina Pölöskey, "Mushi" (1913–1985) was the youngest of three children in a Transylvanian family. Takáts, "Futok..." reports on the family.

74 Némethy Kesserű, *"Szabadságom lett a börtönöm,"* 34–66. and Torbágyi, *Magyarok Latin-Amerikában*, 116–26.

75 *Nagy Töhötöm levele Nyisztor Zoltánhoz.* Buenos Aires, April 24, 1949. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letter 5. 3.

might be explained by the fact that he held very different opinions concerning Mindszenty than the mainstream of Hungarian expatriates in Argentina. The political orientation of the "forty-eighters" may also have played a role in Nagy's not exposing himself to the organizations that they dominated.[76] He would later characterize the Hungarian colony in Argentina to Hungarian state security as a right and far-right group with which he explicitly avoided any dealings.[77]

A Hungarians state security recording from 1966 nonetheless suggests that Nagy's social life was intensive. Following his marriage and the birth of his daughter Krisztina in September 1949, the people he kept most in contact with were Jesuits, and—by way of correspondence—his sister in Hungary.

> Before I got married, which happened quickly after I left [the Society of Jesus], I went to the then Provincial, Father Moglia, and told him of my plan. He was taken aback, terrified in fact, and nearly begged me not to do this, as it would completely sever my way back to the Order, should I someday wish to return. [...] So, I declared that, according to the laws of natural order, I was going to get married and live a decent family life. The father acknowledged it with sadness but didn't get angry. I know because I continued to meet him at his mother's house, where we would have tea and talk all afternoon once a month or every three months.[78]

76 *Report.* Budapest, September 29, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 86–102. He reported, amongst other things, that he became acquainted with László Endre's widow, who "told me that Eichmann was their personal guest for two months, stayed at their house, and because she was an avid rider, would ride with him almost every morning..." *Report.* Budapest, October 26, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 109.

77 *Report.* Budapest, September 29, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 86–102.

78 Hungarian state security created audio recordings of several meetings with Nagy in 1966. One of these can be found on tape at the Historical Archives of the State Security Services under the number ÁBTL 4.9. H-6/15. This recording has been transcribed. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 60–73. Multiple recordings, unavailable on tape, have also been transcribed, and can be found in Nagy's state security material ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 74–75., 76–85., 86–102. The extant recorded material presents Nagy's clerical and political connections in detail. For the transcription quoted above, see *Report.* Budapest, August 31, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 60–61.

Nagy described his marriage plans to his sister in detail in multiple letters, likely in order to bring the two women closer together, despite the geographic distance between them:

> I'm not a 20-year-old youth burning with passion who falls head over heels for a dimple. I'm leaving a world, and it can only be substituted by another world. That 'someone' must really be valuable… […] one day I met You. Yes, little sister, You, your doppelganger. She is as tall as you are, her soul is as rich as yours, she has as much finesse as you. I felt you in her at first sight, I found you in a faraway land.[79]

In existential terms, this was a difficult period for Nagy, to such an extent that, when he reminisced about it nearly two decades later, he expressed gratitude to the Argentine Jesuits for the financial and other support they had provided.[80] P. Moglia, Provincial Superior of the Argentine Jesuit Province,[81] even procured a doctoral diploma made out to Sándor Nagy Varga/Alejandro Nagy Varga, using Nagy's mother's maiden name and his middle name. With this, Nagy was eventually able to embark upon his lay life and career.[82]

There is evidence, however, that the beginning of Nagy's lay life might have taken a very different turn. As his position worsened within the Jesuit Order, he took stock of his old connections, rekindling his friendship with Zsolt Aradi via correspondence, and having received "Signor Stephano's" address from him, wrote to him as well. "I expect help from you in the beginning," he wrote.[83] The idea for a book, for which he tried to find an interested publisher and secure an advance through Aradi and "Signor Stephano," first appeared in their correspondence. However, Aradi's position was far from stable, as he continued work for the US government, by now also in the Western Hemisphere (specifically, New York City). He

79 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Erzsébet Nagy, Mrs Lajos Bihary.* Montevideo, 7 May 1948. MNL NL, XIII. 30. *Documents of the Bihary family.*

80 ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 61.

81 Juan Marcos Moglia (1900–1987) was a Jesuit, and Provincial Superior of Argentina between 1946 and 1952.

82 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 294–95.

83 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zsolt Aradi.* "Montevideo for the time being," 12 November 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/192. Letter 1. 2.

had just begun taking on new assignments on behalf of the CIA, which was adapting to the Cold War, while pursuing US citizenship and finalizing his divorce.[84] Aradi had to work with 'new' Hungarians of much the same ilk as the "forty-eighters" who had appeared in Argentina, among whom were many characters with unsavory ties and political histories.[85] As Aradi's milieu changed, perhaps owing to his friendship with Nagy, he did not want Nagy to be involved with it. His letters to him were friendly, but sobering, and succeeded in diverting Nagy's attention elsewhere. It is notable that, at this point, Nagy's first ideas about writing a book on his clerical experiences began to take shape.[86]

Nagy's letter to Aradi of October 28, 1948, tells a very different story than is later recounted in his book *Jesuits and Freemasons*, as well as in the various state security reports. He notes how his friends who remained within the Church advised him to present himself to President Perón as a social expert and to seek government employment:

> The day I leave the Order [Society of Jesus], I will take a position in the national center of worker syndicates, in the president's office as expert advisor, or even chief advisor (assessor general), corresponding to the title, rank and pay of a ministerial advisor at home. It wasn't that there was a position and they found someone to fill it, but rather, that there is a man for whom the president himself created a position. Now they're waiting for me because I'm still "taking care of business." None of my future coworkers know that I used to be a priest. I will show up sporting a short beard and carrying brand new identification. As I do. I can afford to rent a four-room luxury apartment with central heating (in Argentina!), running water [...] and what have you. True, I must note that only the president knows that I used to be a Jesuit, so there's no

84 Bare, "The curious case," 121.

85 Aradi was advised by Martin Himler to not work with Voice of America owing to the anti-Semitic and right-wing tendencies of many of its Hungarian specialists, specifically Tibor Eckhardt. Following the war, Eckhardt and other Hungarian expatriates demonized Himler (like Aradi, a Catholic of Jewish ethnicity albeit a lapsed one). Aradi ignored this warning and sought employment with the organization which he held well into the 1950s. See Aradi, Zsolt, Volume 3, in: NARA II, RG 263, E ZZ-18, B 3 as well as Bare, "The curious case."

86 *Zsolt Aradi's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Rome, 4 January 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/305. Letter 4.

> deceit in my future life, but it's better for him as well as my work if no one else finds out who I was. I'm anticipating big assignments.[87]

Two months later, he again mentioned the same position in his farewell letter to Provincial István Borbély,[88] and claimed to have been personally recommended to Eva Perón as head advisor of the worker syndicates.[89] Still, it appears as though he never filled the position, or perhaps only did so for a brief period of time. He described his new job to Nyisztor in detail in April 1949, after which it becomes impossible to determine exactly how his promising secular career ended:

> I worked at the Presidencia—I still do at the—famous "Casa Rosada," close to President Perón's rooms. I submitted a draft, a short one on the youth movement to start, with political participation from the right and the left, giving them a taste of what might be done here. Actually, I wrote about KALOT. I was immediately tasked with drawing up a plan in greater detail, and that was when I gave up my role of consultant and advisor. I got at it, and working until dawn for two days straight, with our famous impetus of the olden days, I submitted a draft, and they were lost for words, all they could say many times was "colossal"! They decided to start a local KALOT movement. [...] It's now up to me to make it into a Levente, another KALOT, or something else, either with or without priests. [...] KALOT floats before my eyes as a phantom, the goals and plans we pursued, and these match Perón's revolutionary and powerful social reforms. [...] I'll write later in detail how Perón is in no fashion a dictator...[90]

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87 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zsolt Aradi.* Buenos Aires, 28 October 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/192. Letter 3.

88 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to István Borbély.* Buenos Aires, 15 December 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/267. Letter 8.

89 *Hernán Benitez's letter to Eva Perón.* Document in Spanish Buenos Aires, 24 March 1949. OSZK Kt., f. 216/478. Nagy produced a Hungarian version of this, offering his services to the government. *P. Alejandro T. Nagy SJ, un organizador especialista [P. Alejandro T. Nagy SJ, a specialist organizer].* Buenos Aires, 20 July 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/89.

90 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Nyisztor.* Buenos Aires, April 24, 1949. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letter 5. 2. The submitted draft includes detailed organigrams of KALOT, which Nagy added to his personal archive in 1950. OSZK Kt., f. 216/100.

Töhötöm Nagy in 1956 in Argentina

Nagy's next contact with Nyisztor would not come for another fifteen years. He also lost touch with Kerkai, as they stopped exchanging letters at around the same time.[91] The only explanation for this is the one that Nagy provided to Nyisztor in late 1963: "I wanted to create something big again, and I even decided what it was going to be; it took fifteen years to realize, and I remained silent about it."[92] Accordingly, there is not much insight from Nagy's contemporaneous writings about how he lived from 1948–1963. One thing is certain, however: Even though his big plans were not realized, his daughter, Krisztina Nagy, had a happy and trouble-free childhood in Buenos Aires. For a while, Nagy earned a living as a photographer, followed by a position as head archivist at the University of Buenos Aires. Thereafter, he became a university lecturer and editor at a publishing house.[93]

91 Kerkai wrote him in 1959, however, Nagy did not answer until October 1959, arguing along similar lines as he had to Nyisztor. *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Csepel Island, November 29, 1959. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365. Letter 25. and *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Buenos Aires, October 27, 1963. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 30.

92 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Nyisztor.* Buenos Aires, November 18, 1963. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letter 6. 1.

93 *Instituto Biblioteolo'gico, 1950.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/436. In a letter to his sister, he describes his job as head archivist. *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Erzsébet Nagy, Mrs Lajos Bihary.* Buenos Aires, December 18, 1952. MNL NL, XIII. 30. *Documents of the Bihary family.*

4.

Perhaps owing to his passion for photography, Nagy sought to capture the slums of Buenos Aires on film. Based on what he saw, and no longer being bound to an ecclesiastical framework, he began organizing a social movement. He wrote about this later: "[g]oing on with the old goal took me to the shantytowns, where I performed real cartography, census-taking, and multi-faceted exploration; then went on to do feverish organizing work, with the aim of taking those destitute people, and organizing them into communities which would provide the basis for villages. They would be led back to the land, from whose misery they escaped to the capital's slightly better misery."[94]

The social plight confronting the masses who had flocked to the Argentine capital owing to the promise of industrialization during Perón's first term as President had become fully evident as a severe social problem by the 1960s. A range of different solutions were proposed. Nagy's idea was to reverse urbanization and lead the urban poor back to the countryside and pastoral life in an organized manner. On August 6, 1964, he submitted a draft outlining his solution to the social problems of the slums. Its first step called for the creation of a new movement modeled on KALOT.[95] The inaugural meeting of this organization took place on September 12, 1964, and the *Asociación de las Comunidades Rurales Argentinas [Association of Argentine Rural Communities]*, ACRA was formed, with Nagy as its secretary-general and de facto leader.

Over the course of ACRA's work, Nagy and his colleagues surveyed the so-called *villa miserias*, the slums in and around Buenos Aires.[96] Detailed data was collected pertaining to thirty-four different sites:

94 *Report.* Budapest, August 16, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 24.

95 *Anteproyecto pro solución del problema de las Villas Miserias [Preliminary project for the solution of the Villas Miserias problem].* Document in Spanish. Buenos Aires, August 6, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 13. fol. The draft was submitted to the *Círculo Argentino de Profesionales de Relaciones Públicas [Argentine Circle of Public Relations Professionals].*

96 The term *villa miseria (misery town)* comes from the title of Bernardo Verbitzky's 1957 novel: *Villa Miseria*.

Table 2: Survey of the Slums in and around Buenos Aires[97]

Name	Dwellings	Residents
1. Dock Sud	250	700
2. Maciel	1,800	6,500
3. Tranquila	1,400	6,000
4. Unnamed	40	200
5. Unnamed	20	806
6. Debenedetti	200	850
7. Canal	20	70
8. Sarandí	30	350
9. Santo Domingo	150	850
10. Las Flores	90	650
11. Barrio el Porvenir	120	550
12. Batería	1,150	2,500
13. Centenario	60	300
14. Unnamed	55	300
15. Corina	2,600	8,000
16. General Belgrano	70	350
17. Madariaga	200	850
18. Luján	450	1,600
19. Morini	30	160
20. Martín García	300	1,100
21. Agüero	260	700
22. Murgiendo	190	450
23. Viaducto	100	400
24. Mitre	1,200	5,000
25. Matianzo	500	2,000
26. Dorrego	900	3,500
27. Almirante Brown (Garrotazo)	750	4,500
28. Adalgisa	2,500	8,000
29. Arroyo Cordero	2,500	8,000
30. Federal	2,900	9,000
31. Carupá	750	4,000
32–33. Barragán	2,500	7,000
34. Liniers	800	4,500
Total	**24,885**	**89,736**

97 *Summary of the survey of slums.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/90. 2.

ACRA's survey examined the health, social, and educational situation of those inhabiting the slums, contrasting it with the governmental, ecclesiastical, and civil structures operating in those same areas. However, ACRA not only engaged in surveying, as its declared goal was to help relocate slum dwellers, after adequate training, to the countryside.[98] As Nagy wrote in his next draft,

> The only humane solution is to transfer them back to the provinces. This calls for carefully selecting the most valuable families who are still willing to work and beginning the relocation program with them. They would attend well-organized training for a few months beforehand, while still in the slums. [...] While the training was underway, preparations for selecting plots of land would take place. [...] After the preparatory courses are complete and equipment has been collected, relocation can commence, with planned farming beginning on a cooperative basis...[99]

Procuring and coordinating support, land, and leases posed a serious challenge to ACRA.[100] Since huge financial, material, and land donations were required, a variety of negotiations needed to be simultaneously conducted.[101] Political promises were numerous during the election campaign, and trusting these, ACRA began its first preparatory course. However, these promises were revealed to be hollow, even though Nagy brought the matter all the way to President Illia.[102] Lacking essential resources, ACRA was unable to accomplish its mission, with its political support disappearing after General Onganía came to power in the Fall of 1966. Shortly thereafter, ACRA simply died out.

Nagy did personally profit from the experiment, however. Through László Varga, a lawyer and former Democratic People's Party member of Parliament, then living and working in the US, he was able to sell the sur-

98 *Summary of the survey of slums.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/90. 10.
99 *Plan to solve the problems of the villa miserias.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 8b. fol.
100 *Lista de necesidades [List of requirements].* Document in Spanish. OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 7. fol.
101 In the provinces Río Dulce and Santa Fe. OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 18. fol. and f. 216/91. 19. fol.
102 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to President Illia on behalf of the ACRA.* Document in Spanish. Buenos Aires, October 16, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 28. fol.

vey's results: "László Varga offered to buy the survey data from me, because he would be able to sell it to UNESCO and the UN. He took some of the data with him, and asked that I mail the remainder. Which I did. I don't remember the exact sum I received for gathering the data, but I do know he paid me handsomely, as I was able to buy a lot of things."[103]

Personal profit, of course, offered little consolation to Nagy considering how many other promising experiments he was contemplating. Despite severe hardships, several of these were brought to fruition. Among them was a Catholic initiative which he possessed a particular interest in.

During his work in the slums, Nagy had naturally come into contact with Catholic priests living there. He might not have realized at the time, however, that he was witnessing the birth of what would later become known as "liberation theology," a Catholic theological approach and socio-political movement stemming from South America.[104] He met Father Soares,[105] whom he tried to involve in ACRA. As Nagy wrote in a letter to Kerkai: "I was introduced to a lay preacher who's been living in a windswept shack for years, celebrates mass in a makeshift cottage, doesn't accept payment, and lives off waxing guitars. He cooks everything for himself and everyone loves him, and he knows everyone in the neighborhood which numbers around 60,000 people, all unemployed shantytown ex-peasants."[106]

Nagy also met another priest who founded a small, shoemaking cooperative, as well as Catholics working on bringing about more hygienic living conditions for slumdwellers through a social, home-building program.[107] However, the path of the poor in Argentina did not lead back to the land, and gathering donations from the government and the Church—as we have seen—was dependent on as many uncontrollable and unpredictable factors as it had been in Hungary.

Nagy was forced to continue searching for his life's purpose

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103 *Report.* Budapest, July 26, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 167.

104 On this see e.g., Chopp and Regan, "Latin American Liberation Theology," 469–84.

105 Francisco "Pancho" Soares (1921–1976) was a Brazilian-born priest living in Argentina. He lived and worked in one of Buenos Aires' slums. In 1976, he was murdered by members of the "Alianza Anticomunista Argentina," a far-right paramilitary group.

106 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai* Buenos Aires, August 14, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 32. 2.

107 He discusses this in the Hungarian state security recordings. ÁBTL 4.9. H-6/15.

VII.

Töhötöm Nagy and Argentine Freemasonry

> *"I joined the Freemasons with pure intentions. I purged every prejudice from within, I wanted to see it for myself from the beginning to the very end: I wanted to be as good a Freemason as I had attempted to be a Jesuit. And I believe I succeeded."*[1]

Once Nagy had settled in Argentina, raised a family, and begun his career, he looked for a new spiritual home. As an old acquaintance, Ágoston Takáts[2] wrote of him: "After the community that reared him and raised him tall—the Jesuit Order—had gone its separate way, he had to find a new community, since he couldn't exist alone."[3]

Searching for a new path and goals, he settled on Freemasonry. The only account of his process of contacting the Argentine Grand Lodge, and asking for admission, is recorded in *Jesuits and Freemasons.* He allegedly shared his plan with Fr Moglia.[4] "Slowly, he warmed to the idea and gave his approval. It would be too much to say he sent me, because he was more cautious than that, but that's how I took it, because to me the Society of Jesus was the world, and it still is. [...] The plan now is for a man turned Jesuit to go to the Freemasons, and just as sincerely become a Freemason. Let's see what happens."[5]

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1 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Nyisztor.* Buenos Aires, November 18, 1963. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letter 6. 2.

2 Dr Ágoston Takáts (1921–2005) was a mathematician, former Jesuit novice, and Kerkai's close collaborator in 1947. He was imprisoned in 1948 and spent three years at the Recsk forced labor camp.

3 Takáts, "Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."

4 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 299.

5 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 300.

Owing to Nagy's Jesuit training, throughout his lay life he sought to fulfill missions and act according to plans, even when the plan was born in the communicative atmosphere of a conversation. During this time, Kerkai could not serve as Nagy's confidant, which likely saw Fr Moglia fill in this role. Since no other sources confirm that he was "sent" to the Freemasons, we cannot know for certain whether the story is a fabrication after the fact, woven together while he was writing his book in order to conceal his identity among the Freemasons. However, Nagy did become a Freemason, seeing in it a way of avoiding both Hungarian expat organizations in Argentina as well as the conservative Catholic church, but still benefit from an intellectual challenge and tightly-bonded "brotherhood," albeit of a different kind than the Society of Jesus.

As Nagy later wrote in *Jesuits and Freemasons*, it was difficult to establish personal contact with the former. Eventually, by accident, he learned that a man in a friend's family was a Freemason. So, Nagy asked him to give a recommendation.[6] This happened, and he was admitted to *Estrella del Oriente* Lodge 27. (Star of the Orient), since there was no Hungarian speaking lodge in Argentina at the time. During his initiation, in answer to the question of what he expected from Freemasonry he replied with a single sentence: "New meaning to my life."[7] He moved through the degrees very quickly, and his experiences provided significant insight concerning the organization's internal activities over the years.[8]

Many Freemasons left Hungary after 1956, with a number ending up in Argentina. In 1960, around fifty Hungarian Masons, working in Argentine lodges bonded under the protection of the Argentine Grand Lodge, the Hungarian speaking Kossuth Lodge 406.[9] Nagy joined them at that time,

6 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 301–302.

7 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek,* 310.

8 His progress up to the 19th degree can be reconstructed from his own records. According to his pocket calendar of 1963, his progress was as follows: 1st degree: August 1, 1952, 2nd degree: August 3, 1953, 3rd degree: September 2, 1954, 4th degree: 1957, 9th degree: September 7, 1959, 14th degree: May 16, 1960, 18th degree: May 20, 1961, 19th degree: [left blank]. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

9 Vári, "Magyar szabadkőművesség," 124–26. The Kossuth Lodge celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1985. Since new generations were unable to hold meetings in Hungarian, and the ban on Freemasonry in Hungary was lifted in 1989, the Kossuth Lodge ceased operations at the end of the 1980s. Active members joined Spanish-speaking lodges. The lodge issued a coin in 1971, 35 mm in diameter, imprinted with a raised relief of Lajos Kossuth.

keeping his original name and Jesuit past a secret, and introducing himself to the Hungarian Masons as Sándor Nagy Varga. He later summed up this period of his life as follows: "[I] was able to rise from the dead on my own. On the one hand, I sought new goals, while on the other, I pursued the old ones within the changed circumstances, with a different program and methods, but basically remaining faithful to the same social principles as before. Exploring and experiencing Freemasonry was a new goal, with which I wished to serve the Society of Jesus that I loved."[10]

Nagy only revealed his life's story to Zoltán Nemes, the Kossuth Lodge's Grand Master, after his plan had matured: He would write a book, not only on the Jesuit Order and the Catholic Church—as he imagined when he left—but on the "two orders," the Jesuits and the Masons, in order to facilitate rapprochement between Freemasonry and the Catholic Church by dispelling prejudices and mutual suspicion. Bearing in mind the Catholic Church's stance on Freemasonry, he must have known that as a Mason he was subject to excommunication, and, although he told several people then and afterwards that he was no longer a believer in the practical sense and did he raise his daughter religiously, he recognized the importance of settling the issue.[11] He recounted a strange dream to his family, wherein he saw himself in two bodies, lying in two coffins; as one of them sat up, he awoke. From his description, his family deduced that his will for action had been 'resurrected.'[12]

Nagy's decision was clearly motivated by the reform processes that had then begun in Rome. His letter, included in the book, addressed Pope Paul VI, sought to prompt the leading clergy to revise its position and do away with the excommunication of Freemasons. He even timed his book's release to coincide with the conclusion of Vatican II's second session, striving to publish *Jesuits and Freemasons* before Christmas 1963. Grand Master

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Symbols of Freemasonry, including a compass and square were also on the coin. Berényi, "Három 'Kossuth Lajos'...," 31–35.

10 *Report.* Budapest, 16 August 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 24.

11 Clement XII was the first to condemn Freemasonry in 1738 in his bull *In eminenti*, followed by seven other Popes up to 1918. Canon 2335 of the book of canon law, in effect, since the 1960s (1917 CIC) affirms the excommunication of Freemasons and members of other societies. In *Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X pontificis Maximi iussu digestus Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus.* Romae, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1917. 635.

12 According to Krisztina Nagy.

Nemes backed his plan, and, together, they searched for someone among the Hungarian Freemasons who could support the project financially. Although he tried to conceal his identity, it became known late that this person was Géza Berény, a fellow Freemason.

According to their contract, Berény paid Nagy a monthly "scholarship," so that he could devote himself entirely to writing and have his text published, with Berény also covering the printing costs. Nagy was obliged to finish the book as quickly as possible, and Nemes to handle legal matters and paperwork.[13] As such, Nagy's old plan to find a sponsor for his work and its publication was realized through Freemasonry.[14]

Nagy wrote the manuscript at a feverish pace, and his wife translated it into Spanish. The book was printed in Spanish in December 1963,[15] followed by a Hungarian edition in 1965.[16] However, Ágoston Takáts notes in his memoir how "with the publication of the book began the problems" in Nagy's life.[17] We can safely assume that Nagy did not mind, and, at this point, was ready to stir the pot again. As he wrote to Nyisztor: "If you knew me, Uncle Zoli, you could have thought that I would never resign to petty bourgeois life [...] I wouldn't disappear into a university archive, or the pursuit of a career."[18] On thing is certain: Nagy had high hopes for the book's publication, and it garnered him quite a bit of recognition among those interested in the subject.

In a later part of the letter to Nyisztor mentioned above, Nagy comes close to providing a summary of the book, noting that it "isn't theory, it isn't an abstract introduction, it isn't philosophy, it's life itself, the expe-

13 Their agreement was concluded on May 31, 1963. According to it, profits were to be shared between Nagy (60%), Berény (28%), and Nemes (12%). OSZK Kt., f. 216/155.

14 Financial difficulties would arise later, mainly concerning the Hungarian edition. Nagy borrowed money from several people, which, when repaid at nominal value represented a significant decrease in actual value owing to the Argentine Peso's rapid inflation. This created a severe source of conflict between Nagy and the Freemasons. OSZK Kt., f. 216/262.

15 Nagy, *Jesuitas y Masones*.

16 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek* [1965]. Danubio published the Hungarian edition, having performed invaluable work among the Hungarian expat publishing houses, thanks to László Czanyó and his son Adorján, who led it. The book was a financial success for the publisher and the parties involved in its publication. *Danubio nyomda- és könyvkiadó vállalat*. In Némethy Kesserű, *"Szabadságom lett a börtönöm,"* 136–39.

17 Takáts, "Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."

18 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Nyisztor* Buenos Aires, November 18, 1963. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letter 6. 1.

rience itself [...] written with unparalleled candidness and power..."[19] He recounted how the book took three months of hard work to complete, and was currently being laid out. In conclusion, he voiced his enthusiastic desire to send it to the Pope and thereby promote lifting the ban on Freemasonry.

Nagy did not just report to Nyisztor, then living in Rome, out of interest, but also to promote the book within the Vatican: "It was you, Uncle Zoli, who helped with the start of my 'literary' career, when you sent Little Magister [Töhötöm Nagy – É.P.] books to review, and published those reviews in Magyar Kultúra."[20] At first, Nyisztor's answer was very positive: "I am filled with awe. You have a wonderful sense of the changing times, and you may resolve a hostility that was excessive or rash from both parties."[21] Even though he eagerly anticipated its release, Zoli did not consider participating in the book's promotion owing to his old age.

Nyisztor's next letter was written after he had read the book, and did not conceal his disappointment.[22] *Jesuits and Freemasons* had not lived up to his expectations. His letter includes several critical observations, and its ending expresses his regret at Nagy's involvement with Freemasonry. "My heart sinks that Töhötöm Nagy, who brought to life and led with high spirituality one of the biggest movements of the interwar period should now fumble with puerile and laughable little ceremonies [...] in order to wash his brethren clean."[23]

While Nyisztor reacted passionately to Nagy's life choices, his critique is objective and detailed: the parts about the Jesuits are exciting, while those concerning the Masons are flat and biased. Nyisztor's opinion of Freemasonry was basically determined by the Church's statements. Regarding *modus vivendi,* he laid out the reality of the experience with Hungarian high priests coming to the Vatican council against Nagy's intentions.

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19 Ibid. 2.

20 Ibid. For more, see the chapter *"Mother, dreams don't lie...."*

21 *Zoltán Nyisztor's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Rome, November 26, 1963. OSZK Kt., f. 216/399. Letter 23.

22 Balázs Csíky had provided a detailed analysis of the debate between Nyisztor and Nagy. In Adriányi and Csíky, *Nyisztor Zoltán*, 252–71.

23 *Zoltán Nyisztor's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Rome, January 24, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/399. Letter 24.

> Many Hungarians visited Rome in the summer. [Regular] priests as well as collaborationist ones who have found their own modus vivendi. Bishops on the Council, good old friends of mine. *Modus vivendi* led to them contacting the people of the Communist embassy, where they praised the system, and didn't even meet in secret. They have become spiritual Janissaries, and such cowardly hoodlums that they keep scaring each other even when among themselves: Careful, they're not going to like this! Etc.—Do you know what official, compromising Catholicism is? A Sybaritic wreck![24]

Nagy replied to this letter three months later and tried to reassure Nyisztor. "[I]n spirit," he wrote, "I feel I'm even more of a Jesuit now than before, and I am fanatically devoted to my Order, and as a single, deep spring, all I have done, I did to maybe do it a big favor. [...] What I'm doing now, and what I want to achieve and apparently will, I consider an actual vocation, and I believe that it will be my greatest gift to my beloved Society of Jesus."[25]

The letter to Nyisztor is a long defense of his actions and his book, ascribing Nyisztor's disappointment partly to his prejudices, but also his bitter historical experience. However, this was not the end of their dispute: Nyisztor published his review in *Katolikus Szemle* (Catholic review) in Rome.[26] In his public reply, Nagy reacted sharply to Nyisztor's published review, mentioning that he was not expecting it after their correspondence. "Your article harshly criticizes the Masonic part, and you write about me as if I got stuck with the Masons and now practice those silly, stupid rites; you just about eulogize me... You were swayed not by arguments, but sudden passion, offended vanity." On his own Masonic persona, he states: "Loyalty is what keeps me around them, I have stayed loyal to my principles, my Order which I left, the Church, and finally Freemasonry, and I'm trying to reconcile the latter two."

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24 Ibid. (*"Rút sybarita váz"*= "Sybaritic wreck" – A reference to Dániel Berzsenyi's poem *Magyarokhoz* (I) *[To the Hungarians (I)]*

25 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Nyisztor.* Buenos Aires, April 30, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letter 9.

26 Nyisztor, "Felmenthető-e."

Nagy then details his social work history to disprove the notion that he is lost. As he writes, "in the slums outside the capital, we are creating village communities with the better families, we train them, and relocate them to the countryside; the government supplies the land, machinery, aid, and the President himself has called my work 'the Argentine wonder'."[27] In conclusion, he mourns his friendship with Nyisztor, "I'm sorry you ended our long and intimate friendship this way."[28]

If nothing else, Nagy's bitter argument with Nyisztor illuminates the difficulties inherent in Catholic-Masonic dialogue.[29] Small consolation was offered by Vatican Radio reporting on the book on August 23 and 24, 1964, during which it allegedly "discussed the book's merits with great praise of a broad horizon."[30] However, the reaction Nagy had anticipated never arrived, although a letter of thanks from Paul VI for the copy he received did. Still, the relationship between the Church and Freemasonry did not appear on the agenda of Vatican II. From the beginning, Nagy had expected Rome to be slow to react, so he never voiced his disappointment. Instead, he always expressed hope, even if—mainly due to his personal relationships—criticism from the Church deeply affected him. He remained optimistic: The open letter to Paul VI at the end of the book was aimed at other readers as well. Nagy had cast a stone into water; now he would observe its ripples.[31]

Apart from a few exceptions, the book was positively received in South America,[32] which Nagy noted with satisfaction from the newspaper cutouts he collected and translated into Hungarian. He was aware of 30–35 reviews:

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27 Töhötöm Nagy. Felmenthető-e a szabadkőművesség? Válasz Dr. Nyisztor Zoltánnak [Can Freemasonry be acquitted? An answer to Dr Zoltán Nyisztor]. *Free Hungary*, July 5, 1966, 6–8. OSZK Kt., f. 216/176.

28 Ibid. 8. His relationship with Nyisztor later improved, despite their difference of opinions.

29 Nagy's book and the statements therein have received widespread criticism from Catholics. See also: Varga, "Mit ér." Béla Német, a former confrere wrote a review to Töhötöm Nagy personally *Béla Német's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Klagenfurt, 9 May 1965. OSZK Kt., f. 216/398. Adler, *Die Freimaurer*, 113–123 also debates statements in *Jesuits and Freemasons*.

30 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Dezső Patzauer.* Buenos Aires, November 3, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/262. Letter 1. *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* [Püspökszentlászló] August 30, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/430. 1. Letter 3.

31 This is confirmed by the fact that Cardinal Franz König began negotiating with Kurt Baresch, Grand Master of the Austrian Grand Lodge in March 1968. On their discussions see Adler, *Die Freimaurer*, 88–96.

32 He disliked the article in *Primer Plana* which made the book seem insignificant. This was mentioned in a letter to Berény dated June 7, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/202.

There was an article in *La Prensa* from June 2, 1964, in the January-February 1965 issue of the prestigious journal *SUR,* and several other places.[33]

Nagy's fellow Masons also reacted positively. Károly Villányi Bokor, a close friend of Nagy's, in presenting the historical relationship and debates between Jesuits, the Catholic Church, and Freemasons describes Nagy's contribution, writes:

> A very noteworthy person speaks, who, through his competence, his past, and his unique position is qualified to present the issue like nobody before him has. Dr. Töhötöm Nagy, Jesuit priest, professed of four vows, currently an advisor and speaker of the highest quality, publishes his book *Jesuits and Freemasons*, wherein this writer, theologian, and human being, who knows both groups perfectly, discusses them with extraordinary knowledge, but above all honesty and impartiality. He seeks to bring the two opposing groups a step closer to creating universal peace, so sought-after, and promoted by sacrifices, and an end to centuries of fighting and hatred.[34]

Bokor was so moved by the subject that he went on to write his own paper entitled *Freemasonry and the Church*, which he dedicated to Nagy.[35] They both contributed to *Freemason Writings*, an anthology published in 1966, in which members of Hungarian lodges from all over the world published their lectures.[36] Nagy's paper was entitled *In Defense of Rural Culture,* wherein he discussed his appreciation of agrarian culture derived from his experiences with KALOT.[37]

Nagy subsequently gave several talks at Masonic lodges relating to *Jesuits and Freemasons.* For example, he held a "draft" at the Masaryk Lodge on March 23, 1964.[38] Before the presentation, Grand Master Nemes intro-

33 *Press reviews.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/174.
34 Dr. Károly Villányi Bokor. *Dr. Töhötöm Nagy – Jesuits and Freemasons.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/180. 2.
35 Károly Villányi Bokor: *A szabadkőművesség és az egyház [Freemasonry and the Church].* Buenos Aires, April 21, 1967. OSZK Kt., f. 216/115.
36 Barrey, *Szabadkőműves írások.*
37 Nagy, *A falusi kultúra védelmében.*
38 A draft is a keynote lecture given at a masonic lodge. OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 11. fol. and f. 216/119.

duced him.[39] From this, it is obvious that the Freemasons had seriously expected the Catholic Church to be more open in light of Vatican II and "review its intransigent position."[40] Grand Master Nemes described Nagy's work as part of an intensifying dialogue, grouping it with Alec Mellor's *Nos frères séparés, les Francs-maçons*[41] and Roger Peyrefitte's *Los hijos de la luz,*[42] both published at around the same time. In emphasizing the work's merit, he noted how Nagy knew both parties, the Catholic Church and Freemasonry, from the inside, and referred to Nagy as "an accredited, authentic expert" of the two opposing camps.[43] Nemes also thought it important to mention that Nagy became a Freemason with the knowledge of the Jesuit Order, and had revealed his Jesuit past to his masonic brethren, thereby vindicating himself to them as well. This was necessary in order to allay the latter's suspicions and buttress Nagy's reputation.

Nagy's next lecture from his book took place at the José Martí Lodge on June 6, 1964. During the discussion following his talk, he was asked whether "The Society of Jesus is a bridge between the Church and Communism?" to which he responded that "The Society of Jesus has always been a bridge between new ideas and trends: Suárez[44] was the first to say power doesn't come from above, but from below, from the people. [...] With Fr Kerkai, we tested something that wasn't a movement built upon love and charity, but a social organization fighting for justice."[45] We cannot determine why Nagy discussed Communism at this meeting, but the question and answer both show a shift in his interests. From it, we learn that despite the success of *Jesuits and Freemasons,* Nagy desired to move on to an even more pressing topic and greater challenge: analyzing the relationship and achieving some sort of compromise between Christianity and Communism, and towards a new *modus vivendi.*

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39 *Dr Zoltán Nemes' Introduction.* Buenos Aires, 23 March 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/119.
40 Ibid. 2. b
41 Alec Mellor, *Nos frères séparés, les Francs-maçons* [Our disowned rothers, the masons]. Paris, Marne, 1961.
42 Roger Peyrefitte, *Los hijos de la luz* [The children of the light]. Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1962.
43 *Dr Zoltán Nemes' introduction.* Buenos Aires, 23 March 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/119. 2. fol. 7.
44 Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) was a Spanish Jesuit philosopher, theologian, and prominent figure of Catholic Baroque philosophy.
45 *At José Martí Lodge.* Buenos Aires, June 6, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/122. 1.

VIII

The Catholic Church, Freemasons, and Communists

> *"The great Marxist revolution has been here for decades. Even though its world of motifs and goals is so plagued by darkness, I have seen clearly for years that God has big plans for it. Which would be in the direction of the purification and social development of the Church. [...] But here is your psychological situation. Almost destined to start a huge purifying and socializing movement among them, to help cleanse away problems and filth, as well as antisocial things within the Church. Based, of course, on truth and honesty, as opposed to falsehood and dishonesty. [...] I saw the motto in Saint Paul's terms: Factus sum anathema pro fratribus..."*[1]

1.

Nagy's gradual drift away from, alienation from, and eventual break with Freemasonry can be traced to his book and the changes in his life that arose from it. Shortly after *Jesuits and Freemasons* was published, Nagy appeared at the Hungarian Embassy in Buenos Aires with a copy, attracting the attention of the Hungarian People's Republic's domestic security services. Indeed, even before showing up at the embassy, attacks from Argentine Hungarians owing to Nagy's portrayal of Mindszenty likely opened the door for him to meet with Hungarian diplomats: "Because of that part of my book

1 *Dániel Hunya SJ's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Szeged, March 29, 1948. OSZK Kt., f. 216/348. Letter 2. Fr Hunya (1900–1957) was Nagy's confessor in Hungary. In this letter, written around the time Nagy left the Order, he plays with the idea of retaining his spiritual child within the community of the Jesuit Order. The Latin quote is from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3) On the life of Hunya see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 98–99.

which concerns Mindszenty and the severe attacks emanating from the right owing to it, I stopped by the Hungarian Embassy in Buenos."[2]

From 1950, the Buenos Aires Embassy represented the Hungarian People's Republic in Argentina. As elsewhere in the world, it closely monitored the Hungarian diaspora's activities. Almost unanimously, Argentine Hungarians were, at the very least, suspicious of policy originating in the motherland.[3]

"In the years of Hungarian communism, Argentine Hungarian leaders and organizations refused every contact with home country organizations and institutions." In these words, Gyula Borbándi detailed the Argentine Hungarian community's mindset.[4] The 1956 repatriation of Antal Páger[5] made it especially clear that eventually more subtle methods, such as cultural networking or luring people home, would replace overt confrontation and ideological struggle.[6] This change of style became obvious in the 1960s after the Political Committee of the MSZMP KB (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee) surveyed the general situation of the Hungarian diaspora[7] and set several priorities for activities in Argentina: "The main task remains to activate and organizationally strengthen the progressive, loyal movement in Argentina" [...]

Parallel to making the operation of the progressive and loyal movement more active, the Political Committee monitored reactionary Hungarian expat organizations and their press at all times. Their internal personal differences must be exacerbated by organizing targeted home visits and repatriations, and their influence must constantly be reduced by appropriate propaganda work. [...]

To organize a suitable candidate's visits home or final repatriation to exacerbate personal differences and to promote the general demise of reactionary expat organizations."[8]

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2 *Report.* Budapest, August 16, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 24. and 86–102.
3 Anderle, "Magyar kormányok," 13–22.
4 Borbándi, *Emigráció és Magyarország*, 196.
5 Antal Páger (1899–1986) was a famous Hungarian actor, who emigrated to Argentina in 1948 and repatriated in 1956.
6 Némethy Kesserű, *"Szabadságom lett a börtönöm,"* 67–69.
7 The Political Committee discussed the diaspora six times between 1958 and 1964, primarily in regard to propaganda tactics. Szabó, "Fellazítási politika," 188.
8 Correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian People's Republic, and the Independent Department of Hungarian Expats of the Ministry and the

Töhötöm Nagy as agent "Franz Kirchenbauer" in 1966

Just like any Argentine Hungarian interested in Hungarian politics, Nagy was obviously aware of the role and activities of the Buenos Aires Embassy. However, unlike the mainstream, he did not dismiss these, but rather saw in them a chance for dialogue and progress. When the opportunity arose for him to become acquainted with the Embassy's staff through Jesuit father József Pesti,[9] who was welcome there, he therefore did not refuse, but, according to a report sent from the Buenos Aires Embassy to Budapest, "took warm interest in such an encounter."[10] Following this meeting and the presentation of his book, he became a regular at the Hungarian Embassy.

Predictably, the Buenos Aires Embassy forwarded reports on Nagy to Budapest,[11] where formal background checks were performed to catch the

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Buenos Aires Embassy. Budapest, 15 December 1961. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j 006036/1961 Argentína 20/g. (10. d.) Published by: Némethy Kesserű, *"Szabadságom lett a börtönöm,"* 322–23.

9 József Pesti (1919–1997) was a Jesuit and missionary. He studied in Rome between 1947 and 1955, and settled in Argentina in 1957, where he became pastor of the Hungarian mission center in Buenos Aires, and taught philosophy at Salvador University. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 178.

10 *Copy of a report from the Buenos Aires Embassy.* Budapest, 27 January 1964. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 82.

11 *Protocol calendars.* 8 June 1965, 23 September 1966, and 18 November 1966. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k 1965 Arg. (10. d.), MNL OL XIX J-1-k Arg. 4/j. (3. d.) and MNL OL XIX J-1-k Arg. 4/j. (3. d.)

fish that had been hooked.[12] Nagy's case was handled by police Captain Gusztáv Bárdos of the Interior Ministry's subdepartment K (active affairs) of Department III/I-5 (Operative Evaluation and Information Department) of the Interior Ministry.[13]

Nagy did not naively introduce himself and his book, but, rather, did so as part of a plan intended to further his own goals, as can be seen by the new book project which resulted. Embarking upon this, Nagy practically offered to collaborate with the Hungarian authorities. The draft, submitted on April 10, 1965, was not intended to elaborate on the relationship between Jesuits and Freemasons, but, casting a wider net, to explore the relationship between the Church and Communism. The book's aim was

> to reveal that the place of the Church was not on the side of Feudalism or Capitalism, where it has drifted due to historical facts and necessity, but, in the spirit of the Gospels and the first Holy Fathers, on the side of Communism. [...] HOW TO WRITE THIS: in a cold and entirely scientific manner, without the least emotional leaning, by listing quotes and data in a theological style, and logical arguments, in the spirit of the polished weaponry of scholastic logic. It will be a typical example of 'using their own weapons against them'. [...] SCHEDULE: 3–4 months, if I can drop some of my regular tasks. It would be very good if it could come out before the end of the Second Vatican Council, and I consider this possible, since I know the subject so well. IT WOULD BE FANTASTIC IF SOMEONE COULD SUMMARIZE the books and pamphlets published to date on the subject in Hungary for orientation purposes. THE TITLE OF THE BOOK may be determined later. Possibly something along the lines of: The Gospel and Communism. The Reforming Church and Communism. The Church in the Political Struggles of History, etc.[14]

12 Information available to state security on the person and activities of Nagy was collected. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 77–86.

13 Gusztáv Bárdos (1928–1990) was a police captain between 1961–1966, and police major from 1966–1968 ÁBTL 2.8.2.1. (Files of secret and top-secret members of Group III/I. of the Ministry for Internal Affairs) 476.

14 *Draft about a book.* Buenos Aires, April 10, 1965. OSZK Kt., f. 216/245.

Jesuits and Freemasons, Nagy's proposal for a new book, and most of all Nagy himself, piqued the Hungarian authorities' curiosity. Not only did they see his possible repatriation as useful for propaganda purposes, but also, he as someone who, as an expert in the field of Church politics, could be useful in a variety of different ways. This is confirmed by his recruitment proposal, written later: "[t]he candidate became known to us when the book was published. [...] The publication of the book and the candidate's future plans form part of our active operations to expose the reactionary, conservative wing of the Church. The Soviet comrades have been informed about these plans and have deemed them important, from an international point of view."[15]

With that accomplished, Bárdos, along with Zoltán Fodor, head of the Latin-American Department of the Foreign Ministry, traveled to Buenos Aires in order to meet Nagy personally and take their relationship to a new level.[16] Their first meeting was held on October 19, 1965 at the Hungarian Embassy in Buenos Aires. During it, Bárdos asked Nagy how they could help with his new book. Bárdos commented on the meeting that

> the biggest help we could offer him would be if we made it possible for him, his wife, and his daughter to visit home for a month, to gather personal experiences and impressions. But he could only visit home if we covered the travel expenses, since he couldn't afford it. Their stay and board wouldn't be a problem because his brother-in-law, a school principal in Törökszentmiklós, Lajos Bihari [sic!] would welcome them to his home. He would essentially complete his book, so that it could be published <u>while consulting with us.</u> [...] Regarding his more distant plans, he said he wished to return permanently....[17]

At the meeting, Nagy did not ask for "somebody" to gather material in Hungary for his new book, but offered to do it himself, and suggested permanent repatriation as a desirable outcome of his collaboration. Although such an open offer raised the Hungarian authorities' suspicions, and they

15 *Proposal.* 7 September 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 41–42.
16 The visit took place between October 11–29, 1965. *Report.* Budapest, November 10, 1965. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 96–102.
17 Ibid. 99–100. (Underlined in the original.)

at first believed him to be an agent provocateur,[18] after Bárdos and Nagy met in person, the former quickly realized this was not the case. Nagy was speaking on his own behalf and sought collaboration. Bárdos, a member of the new generation of professionally trained state security officers—he had majored in psychology at the ELTE in Budapest—summed up Nagy's possible motivations thus:

> Dr Töhötöm Nagy is a man of very high culture driven by great ambition. He had a dazzling career in the Jesuit Order, which was shattered by his conflict with Mindszenty. I believe his primary motivation in approaching us is his hatred of Mindszenty due to his lost career, and a desire to somehow remain an important person. [...] He expressed his great affinity towards the mystical[19] in his book, and, I believe, this stems from his love for conspiratorial work. In his book, he likes to emphasize how important a role he played in covert Vatican diplomacy. I believe his egocentrism, lost career, ambition, desire for revenge, attraction to the mystical, and his "social" views opposing conservative clerical circles, have all driven him to work with us.[20]

Based on this summary, Bárdos recommended that Nagy's request be granted. For his part, Nagy considered the outcome a success:

> I visited the Hungarian Embassy of Buenos Aires about my book, I distributed a few copies among the gentlemen there, because I trusted that I had been of service to them in some way by writing what I did about Mindszenty, and that they would be willing to continue to negotiate with me and search for a modus vivendi, which had been suspended 18 years ago. I offered to continue these negotiations, to which they eventually answered that they were willing to invite me and cover my travel expenses. To this, I replied that I wanted my family to come along, wondering whether the triple expenditure was worth it to them, which it was.[21]

18 *Memorandum.* Budapest, June 21, 1965. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 89–91.
19 He probably simply meant mysterious.
20 *Report.* November 10, Budapest, 1965. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 101.
21 *Abstract.* Budapest, August 30, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 48–49.

After being made aware of his own value, Nagy wrote a letter of gratitude to the Hungarian Government for allowing him to visit home. He continued to strike while the iron was hot, noting how, in Argentina, he was already suspected of being a Communist, and that this sentiment would certainly increase after his visit to Hungary. Still, he accepted this as "[w]hen I'm subject to investigation and possible arrest, these events will hugely increase the credibility and honesty of the [planned] book."[22] With these words, he shrewdly requested an advance for his book.

2.

The Hungarian authorities kept their word and arranged for Nagy and his family to travel home for two months in the summer of 1966 "as guests of the World Federation of Hungarians."[23] Not only were their travel expenses covered, but Nagy was also paid an advance. On both his journey to and from Hungary, he stopped in Rome, where he revived old relationships and accepted help from Hungarian Jesuits.[24] In total, his journey lasted more than three months, and included a brief European cruise. In Hungary, the Nagy's visited relatives, with Töhötöm visiting his clerical brethren, former confreres, several bishops, and also stopping by the editorial office of *Új ember* (New man).[25] Nagy later summarized his experiences for the state security authorities: "I saw in Hungary a calm, steady development, which demonstrated recognizance of past mistakes. In Rome, there was quarrelling and squabbling over development that didn't intend to correct recent minor and major mistakes, but rather, to compensate for

22 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to the Hungarian Government.* Buenos Aires, April 25, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/244.

23 The World Federation of Hungarians was originally created in 1938. Following World War II, it was not banned, although its organization and leadership changed several times. The last of these prior to Nagy's visit came in 1959. As part of the Kádár régime's proactive policy towards the emigration, the organization's potential among Hungarians abroad was exploited in an increasingly versatile way. Its board was elected by the National Council of the Patriotic People's Front but supervised on the governmental level by the Foreign Ministry. Within the Foreign Ministry, the Independent Department of Hungarian Expatriates coordinated its activities both at home and abroad. Szabó, "Fellazítási politika," 189–91.

24 *Proposal.* Budapest, September 7, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 44.

25 *Report.* August 27, Budapest, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 33–43. and *Report.* Budapest, August 29, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 44–59.

centuries of lagging behind in a matter of months. Rome strengthened my allegiance to Hungary [i.e., The Hungarian People's Republic – É.P.]"[26]

During Nagy's stay in Hungary, he met Bárdos and his colleagues several times, after which Hungarian state security eventually made him sign a collaboration agreement on September 15, 1966. From that point until 1972, Nagy was employed as an agent (codename: "Franz Kirchenbauer"), after which he was a secret agent ("Sándor Kőműves") of Subdepartment III/I-5-K, Subdepartment III/II-1/b,[27] and Department III/I-4[28] until his death. From November 1974, he worked for the latter two sub-departments.

Nagy's recruitment had been affected for "patriotic reasons" in a hitherto unidentified K (conspiratorial) safehouse in Budapest codenamed "Budavár" (Buda Castle), where he also frequently appeared to give reports.[29] Upon recruitment, his handlers spoke of his cooperation with the agencies as written confirmation of a conspiratorial collaboration that had, in essence, already been established. The fact that he had to physically write and sign a statement "visibly disturbed and caused him discomfort. He said he was ready to give such a statement, but that this request was a manifestation of distrust towards him. [...] He emphasized that he was ready to do 'intelligence' work for us but didn't want to be asked to spy beyond his capabilities (e. g. photographing structures). This latter concern of his was easily allayed ..."[30]

Taking his photographic work into account, Nagy's argument seems more like an excuse; however, Bárdos knew that he could push Nagy, owing to what had already been invested in him and the leverage Bardos possessed. Still desiring repatriation, which the authorities could easily thwart, Nagy eventually did provide and sign a written statement.[31] His interlocutors believed that he was aware of the nature of his collaboration, and did not push him to explicitly name the authority, with the ref-

26 *Network report.* Rome, September 19, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 22.
27 This subdepartment dealt with South American counterintelligence.
28 This department handled intelligence on the Vatican, Israel, and Catholic Church. State security agencies agreed on his double employment. *Proposal.* Budapest, October 16, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 154. See also: Tóth, "A politikai hírszerzés."
29 *Report.* Budapest, September 20, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 54. On this see Tabajdi, *Budapest*, 174–76.
30 *Report.* Budapest, September 20, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 54–55.
31 *Statement.* Budapest, 15 September 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 57/1.

erence instead being to "competent authorities" of the Hungarian People's Republic. Bárdos was his first case officer, with police Major János Fürjes[32] participating in his recruitment and "training."[33] Nagy had a direct working relationship with Bárdos, referring to him as "my friend Guszti" in salutations,[34] as he deemed subjective communication necessary in his interpersonal relations. 'Guszti's name and phone number can be found in the emergency contact section of Nagy's desk calendars every year.[35]

Although the questionnaire accompanying his recruitment did not explicitly list reporting on specific individuals as one of his responsibilities, but rather "disruptive action in the Catholic world Church (by literary and journalistic activities),"[36] Nagy fascinated the authorities with his detailed reports on clerical relationships during his stay in Hungary in 1966.[37] He discussed Argentine Jesuits, and shared the information and impressions acquired during visits with his case officer. Following his meetings in Rome, he reported on his discussions with Fr Andor Varga,[38] then Vicar General of the Jesuit Order. Nagy detailed how Varga welcomed him in a friendly manner, expressing no doubts about his fealty to the Order and confirming that the Jesuits generally saw him as someone "capable of improving the Church's position in Hungary." In Rome "he was considered a spear that could pierce and widen the gap."[39]

Nagy and Varga discussed the internal affairs and fault lines within the Jesuit Order, the qualities and perspectives of Superior General Pedro

32 János Fürjes (1920–?), was a police Major between 1962–1967, Lt. Colonel from 1967, and head of Subdepartment III/I-5-K at the same time. ÁBTL 2.8.2.1. (Files of secret and top-secret members of Department III/I. of the Ministry for Internal Affairs) 39. https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:13:::NO:13:P13_OBJECT_ID,P13_OBJECT_TYPE:970201,ELETRAJZ (Last retrieved: 01.08.2023.)

33 *Proposal.* Budapest, September 20, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 55.

34 Salutations such as "my friend Guszti" and "Dear old Guszti" are common in Nagy's state security files. A few examples: ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 47., 53., 78., 79., etc.

35 *Calendars, notebooks.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

36 *Questionnaire on network person.* ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 32. As with OSS and SSU, Nagy would work with both intelligence and counterintelligence.

37 See his sound recordings and their transcripts. ÁBTL 4.9. H-6/15.; ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 60–73, 74–75, 76–85 and 86–102.

38 Andor Varga SJ (1917–1994) was a Jesuit, university professor, brother of Béla Varga, and Speaker of the National Assembly. He received his doctoral degree in philosophy at the Gregoriana in Rome in 1952, after which he lectured at various North American colleges and universities. He served as Vicar General in Rome between 1966 and 1971. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 238.

39 *Proposal.* Budapest, September 7, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 43.

Arrupe,[40] newly elected after the death of Janssens, and the global and regional tasks confronting the order concerning East-Central Europe just before the second session of the Jesuit's 31st General Congregation.[41] For the last of these, Nagy offered himself to Varga as a mediator, and notified the Hungarian authorities of this option.[42] Nagy corresponded with Cardinal Augustin Bea,[43] also offering to act as an intermediary between Hungary and the Vatican. In his response, Bea referred him to Cardinal Franz König,[44] which Nagy reported to his case officer in the hope of being able to substantively negotiate with König on his next journey.[45] Bearing all this in mind, the Hungarian authorities saw his recruitment as justified, not only because of the usefulness of his literary and journalistic activities, but also the ease with which he penetrated the Vatican and Jesuit headquarters in Rome. So long as Nagy was trusted there, they could disinform clerical circles on a regular and planned basis.[46]

Nagy's first task on his return journey to Argentina was to stop in Vienna and Rome in order to develop his existing contacts and reveal his intentions of permanently returning to Hungary. This tactic, which he referred to as his behavioral line, was first tested with István Balló, the deputy chief of the MSZMP KB's Agitation and Propaganda Department, and Imre Miklós, vice president of the State Office for Church Affairs.[47] Accordingly, Nagy reflected positively on his experiences in Hungary while at the Jesuit Order's headquarters in Rome.[48]

The potential of Nagy's connections in Rome was rated so highly by Hungarian state security that two secret rendezvous were arranged abroad, where he was to report personally on his progress. As previously agreed upon, Nagy informed Bárdos through a postcard code that he was to

40 Pedro Arrupe SJ (1907–1991) was a Jesuit of Basque descent who served as Superior General of the Jesuit Order between 1965 and 1983.

41 Bangert, *A jezsuiták*, 443–44.

42 *Report.* Budapest, August 31, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 66.

43 Augustin Bea SJ (1881–1968) was a German Jesuit, biblical theologian, and president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity from 1960 until his death.

44 Franz König (1905–2004) was an Austrian Cardinal committed to ecumenism. He served as President of the Vatican Secretariat for Nonbelievers from 1965 until 1980.

45 *Report.* Budapest, August 31, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 65.

46 ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 44.

47 ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 46.

48 *Disinformation for the Jesuit Generalate.* [no place] September 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 112–127.

appear at the meeting planned for October 17, 1966 in front of Vienna's Weltspiegel Kino.[49] On receiving this, Bárdos travelled to Vienna with his colleagues, and, after ensuring that they were not being followed, met with his agent. Nagy, however, gave a more substantial report at a clandestine meeting in Zagreb, three days later, on October 20. The information he provided was so convincing that Bárdos, who had been promoted to major in the interim, signed off on the Nagy family's repatriation. Nagy was informed that "the Presidential Council [of the Hungarian People's Republic] decided positively on your application for repatriation..."[50]

As Nagy returned to Buenos Aires, he drafted a thank-you letter to Ottó Beöthy,[51] secretary general of the World Federation of Hungarians, and Zoltán Komornik, his deputy, knowing that both had helped facilitate his plan to return to Hungary.[52] At that moment, neither the price for his repatriation, nor the fact that he had arbitrarily set a new direction for the life of his family, disturbed him.[53]

3.

While awaiting repatriation, Nagy was thus officially commissioned to write a new book on the relationship between the Church and Communism. This would adhere to his original draft, but also entail reworking *Jesuits and Freemasons* to meet the needs of the Hungarian state, and writing articles and studies on the history of the Church and Christianity and the available options for it to connect to socialism.[54] Before giving Nagy direction as to the theoretical line his books should follow, 'Guszti' again consulted with Imre Miklós and József Lukács, the latter editor-in-chief of *Világosság* (Daylight). Bárdos expected Nagy's new book to "expose

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49 *Report.* Budapest, 12 October 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 27.

50 *Report.* Budapest, October 26, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 34–40.

51 Ottó Beöthy was head of the World Federation of Hungarians from 1959 to 1967.

52 *Töhötöm Nagy's letters to Zoltán Komornik and Ottó Beöthy.* Buenos Aires, November 14, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/246. and f. 216/247.

53 Ágoston Takáts characterized their relationship with the following: "Paulina – nicknamed 'Mushi' was incredibly intelligent and well-read [...] she also had an amazing sense and knowledge of politics. [...] Later – here in Hungary – we got to know her better, we held her in high regard and loved her dearly. [...] We felt sorry for Mushi as her husband 'considered her his creation', as if Mushi had him to thank for every good thing, every value and knowledge, as if without him she would just be a pretty, more or less intelligent, polylingual 'socialite'." Takáts, "Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."

54 *Report.* Budapest, October 26, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 40.

with a left-wing Catholic tinge the reactionary role the Roman Catholic Church has played in history, unmask conservative forces, and reach the ultimate conclusion that the only way for the Church to survive was by acknowledging the socialist social order, and serve the cause of social progress."[55] Thus, while in Chile, in 1968, Töhötöm Nagy published *Iglesia y Comunismo* (Church and Communism).[56]

The work's genre and contents are difficult to pin down: It is equal parts compendium, mental exercise, and utopic vision. Reading it, one cannot help but think of István Bibó's *Uchronia*.[57] In *Church and Communism*, Nagy discusses a fictional synod—the non-existent fifth session of Vatican II.[58] Its only topic of discussion, in keeping with Nagy's world view, is the social issue, which he defines as the common denominator between Christianity and Communism. Both belief systems offer something of substance in this regard, and, according to Nagy, should be partners in solving the underlying question. Each fictional address by the council's participants affords Nagy a means of expressing himself: Brazilian, North American, Spanish, Belgian, Dutch, German, African, and other bishops espouse the social views Nagy attributed to each country. For Nagy, working out the dialogue between Communism, embodying secular eschatology, and Christianity, proclaiming transcendent eschatology, was a very real theological and philosophical exercise, far from a mere reconciliation of historical and political views and interests. However, there also existed a chance that this would call both him and his suitability as a theoretical mediator into question, ultimately undermining his project.

For precisely this reason, the period between Nagy's return to South America and his final repatriation to Hungary proved to be a troubled one in both his life and that of his family. As had been anticipated, his return to Buenos Aires was greeted with suspicion, not just among Hungarian expat circles. In describing the political situation in Argentina to István Vida, a former student at Kalocsa and secretary of the *Hivatásszervezet*, with whom he had rekindled his friendship during his visit to Hungary, he

55 ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 41–42.
56 Nagy, *Iglesia y Comunismo*.
57 Bibó, "Ha a zsinati mozgalom," 267–82.
58 The Hungarian manuscript of the book can be found at: OSZK Kt., f. 216/182. and f. 216/184., also at the Hungarian Electronic Library: https://mek.oszk.hu/15700/15792/.

remarked: "We have found a new, right-wing dictatorship in full bloom. I quietly resumed my life at home [in Argentina] ..."[59]

It was also evident to the Hungarian authorities that Nagy's new book must be hidden from the right-wing, staunchly anticommunist, government of General Onganía, who had just assumed power in Argentina. They considered it unsafe for Nagy to remain in the country; however, it would be equally problematic for him to go elsewhere, as both Paraguay and Bolivia (two options for temporary residence) would have extradited him to Argentina.[60] As a result, it was decided that Nagy should travel to Chile and complete his manuscript there. Nagy might have suggested this country himself, because it served as natural temporary refuge for multiple reasons. In a *Pro memoria* dated January 12, 1967, presenting his social work, he notes the invitation he had received to discuss *Jesuits and Freemasons* at a Chilean university.[61]

After checking with the Argentinian authorities, he accepted this invitation, and apparently also rekindled his relationships with several Chilean Jesuits during his stay. In one letter addressed to him, the writer notes how he met him for dinner at the *Centro Bellarmino*, a Jesuit center in the capital, Santiago de Chile. From this, we can fairly conclude that Nagy spent time among Chilean Jesuits while giving his university lectures and working on his upcoming book.[62] Nagy mentions the *Centro Bellarmino* and the Chilean Jesuits in a letter to 'Guszti', the latter whom he claims to have protected during a TV interview from accusations that they were proponents of land reform.[63] Owing to the topicality, we can assume that Nagy's relationship to the Chilean Jesuits must have been active at this point in time.

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59 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to István Vida.* Buenos Aires, November 14, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/443. Letter 2. 2.

60 *Report.* Buenos Aires, March 26, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 52.

61 *Pro memoria de una posible incorporación de Alejandro Töhötöm Nagy Varga en la colonización de las familias bolivianas erradicadas de la Argentina [Pro memoria of a possible incorporation of Alejandro Töhötöm Nagy Varga in the colonization of Bolivian families expelled from Argentina].* Document in Spanish. Buenos Aires, January 12, 1967. OSZK Kt., f. 216/91. 27. fol. 2. On the proposal: *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Gusztáv Bárdos.* [no place] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 53/a.

62 *Eugene K. Culhane SJ's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* New York, January 3, 1967. OSZK Kt., f. 216/329. Letter 1.

63 This only proves some sort of connection, but not that Nagy lived among them. *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Gusztáv Bárdos.* [no place] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 55.

The above suggests that Nagy wrote *Church and Communism* among the Chilean Jesuits, utilizing their connections and structures. Beginning in February of 1967, Nagy traveled on for longer periods and on several occasions to Santiago de Chile, returning to Buenos Aires and his family from time to time to submit chapters of his book at the Embassy and receive new instructions.[64] The Hungarian state contributed $100 per month to the book.[65] This was eventually increased, given the poor state of Nagy's personal finances. Previously, the Hungarian authorities believed Nagy supplemented his income—to $150—by selling flintstones in Santiago.[66]

At around the same time, Nagy caught the attention of SIDE, the Argentine intelligence service.[67] He claims that they began surveilling him during his work in the Buenos Aires slums, and personally interviewed him following his return from Europe.[68] Since there were Masons in SIDE, as Nagy had been told, he was either supposed to be a Communist, or a man of the Vatican. His European trip cast doubt upon his allegiance to Freemasonry, providing one more reason to permanently leave Argentina.[69]

The subject of *Church and Communism* suggested a topic beyond the competence of Freemasonry, despite Nagy's still formally being a Mason. This, in turn, fueled protests against him and his activities in the Kossuth Lodge.[70] Following his return from Europe, the Superior Council (Consejo Superior) of *Estrella del Oriente*, the mother lodge, filed disciplinary action against him on the grounds of the complaints made at the Kossuth Lodge. Nagy successfully cleared his name in a plea, and so was not disciplined. However, the Kossuth Lodge pressed on, disputing his membership due to non-payment of dues.[71]

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64 *Report.* Buenos Aires, February 3, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 45. and *Report.* Buenos Aires, March 26, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 51–52.

65 *Report.* Buenos Aires, March 26, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 51.

66 *Report.* Buenos Aires, July 3, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 75.

67 SIDE = Secretaría de Inteligencia del Estado (Secretariat of State Intelligence), its predecessor under Perón: CIDE = Coordinación de Informaciones del Estado (State Intelligence Coordination). Both names are used interchangeably in communications between Nagy and Hungarian state security officials, but the official name of the organization, from 1956, was SIDE. On his surveillance: *Report.* Budapest, September 29, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 88–90.

68 *Summary.* Buenos Aires, April 30, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 57–62.

69 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Gusztáv Bárdos* [no place] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 53–56.

70 He discusses this in his letter to fellow Mason Tamás Grósz. Buenos Aires, December 28, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/226.

71 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Parisian and Canadian Freemasons.* Buenos Aires, June 23, 1967. OSZK Kt., f. 216/261. 1.

Worshipful Master Tamás Horváth requested information from Nagy as to his journeys to Hungary, Europe, and Chile, how he had funded them, and what topics had been discussed.[72] The basis for this inquiry was Nagy's lack of obedience, his recklessness in taking this on as a Mason, and the fact that his fellow Masons believed he had travelled to Hungary in 1966 "on the Communist dime." Nagy did not refute any of these allegations, only adding additional nuance to them: "[t]he fact is, it happened on the Communist AND [emphasis: Töhötöm Nagy] Vatican dime, since I mediated between them, which makes it entirely different!"[73]

Nagy's clarification, however, did not satisfy the Masons. The dispute came to a head when Nagy stated in a letter dated December 29, 1966 to Horváth that he was leaving the Kossuth Lodge. In the same text, he stated confidently that he was not breaking with Freemasonry, and would remain a member of the mother lodge, *Estrella del Oriente*.[74] The very next year, 1967, Nagy quit Freemasonry altogether, writing simply: "I am no longer a Mason."[75] He compared this exit to the way in which he had left the Jesuit Order some two decades earlier : "There and then, the struggle was on an international level: historical personalities sought orientation in a Europe in turmoil; it was worthwhile to debate them, it was worthwhile to wait and see them realize twenty years later exactly what I had fought for back then. Now I would not even have to fight, just bicker, in the tiny Kossuth Lodge, destroyed by some minor squabble..."[76]

Horváth later explained the necessity of the steps taken against Nagy: The rule of General Onganía posed an existential threat to Argentine Freemasonry. In such a volatile climate, the entirety of Argentine Freemasonry would have suffered if it came to light that Nagy, a Mason, had written and published a book in Chile advocating for compromise and dialogue between the Catholic Church and Communism. According to Horváth's report, it was his perception of this danger that prompted Grand Master

72 *Tamás Horváth's letters to Töhötöm Nagy.* Buenos Aires, December 6 and 16, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/347. Letters 2. and 3.

73 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Parisian and Canadian Freemasons.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/261. 2.

74 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Tamás Horváth.* Buenos Aires, December 29, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/228. Letter 2.

75 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to the lodges under the Argentine Grand Lodge.* Buenos Aires, November 4, 1967. OSZK Kt., f. 216/127. 1.

76 Ibid. 4.

Carlos Wilson to request that he apply section 20 and banish Nagy from the Kossuth Lodge for non-payment of membership fees and failure to appear.[77]

Nagy was fully aware of the Freemasons' concerns. As he wrote to a fellow Mason in Canada: "Apparently the threat was serious. The Grand Lodge destroyed all the files and lists of names and prepared for persecution."[78] No mention was made of what this had to do with his own activities. Presumably, Nagy had lost interest in Argentine Freemasonry, his primary thoughts instead dedicated to his new book and pending repatriation.

4.

Bárdos visited Buenos Aires as a courier again between May 19 and June 10, 1967. He had to discuss the pending completion of *Church and Communism* with Nagy, along with his family's repatriation, and "our critique of the completed parts of the manuscript, and to make him understand and accept the needs and viewpoints which we would like put forward in the book."[79] 'Guszti's' first meeting with Nagy occurred at the Hungarian Embassy in Buenos Aires on May 22, 1967. There, they simply agreed, as they had previously, to hold longer discussions elsewhere at another time for safety reasons. Two days later, Bárdos would rendezvous with Nagy at the Hungarian Embassy in Santiago. Plane tickets and petty cash was given to Nagy to facilitate the meeting. Over the course of two days, May 24–25, and several sessions, the two discussed all of the topics at length.

Bárdos had the following to say in his report: "I presented our critique of the forthcoming book's line and message, discussing specific phrasing. These pertained mostly to a cleverer exposé of imperialism and neo-colonialism, a decoupling of the relationship between the USA and the Vatican, deepening suspicion between conservative and progressive forces within the Vatican, discrediting conservative viewpoints, and helping readers understand the Communist position on the Church and religion."[80]

For 'Guszti', the meeting was a success as "[t]he agent accepted every piece of criticism and promised to revise the manuscript accordingly,

77 Horváth, *Emlékezés Nagy Töhötömre,* 71–72.
78 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Dezső Patzauer.* Buenos Aires, November 9, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/262. Letter 17. 2.
79 *Report.* Budapest, July 3, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 73.
80 *Report.* Budapest, July 3, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 75.

and to take them into account while writing further minor chapters."[81] They also discussed Nagy's plans, which he had mentioned a few months prior in Budapest, in detail. He intended to seek publication of a second edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons* parallel to writing his new work, so that when they would next meet in person, they could discuss both projects. Nagy argued further that quick editions of *Jesuits and Freemasons* would be important for his new book, because "it would increase the gravity, influence and value of my book on the synod."[82]

"My development and maturation would become clear. It would provide a basis for the new book. As a 'sequel,' it's much more interesting, and we would also score a publishing success. The author of such a book would have more say, and his words would carry greater weight, than if the Hungarian public were to first receive the book on the synod."[83]

With this, he proposed that *Jesuits and Freemasons* be republished, first both in Hungary and abroad, before *Church and Communism,* while also expecting that the latter would be published in Hungarian after its Spanish edition (*Iglesia y Comunismo*) was released. Apart from the new Hungarian edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons*, revised French and German editions were also discussed. Bárdos did not categorically rule out publishing Nagy's books, and actually supported the idea, since *Jesuits and Freemasons* had played such a significant role in his recruitment. For their part, Hungarian state security considered it a publication which served the interest of the Hungarian People's Republic.[84] As a result, further editions of the book, the realization of which would occur simultaneously to publishing *Church and Communism* and the Nagy's repatriation, became a common goal at their meeting in Santiago

Nagy's plans coincided entirely with the interests of Hungarian state security authorities at the time. With his publishing plans, he was preaching to the choir, and both the case officer and his agent parted ways in Santiago in total agreement:

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81 Ibid.

82 *Comments on the French edition of Jesuits and Freemasons.* Buenos Aires, 22 May 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 68.

83 Ibid.

84 *Proposal.* Budapest, September 7, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 41.

> I conclude from the meetings that 'Kirchenbauer's' disposition towards us is unchanged. His intent to return home is sincere. He was visibly delighted about the meeting. He kept saying that the honest conversation had released the tension within him. I feel affirmed based on the experience of this meeting, that we have judged his person, his aims and his goals correctly, and that our picture of him is in no need of revision. His social, "people-friendly" mindset is paired with a romantic, enthusiastic, paranoid personality, urging him to constantly perform, show off, and seek self-promotion. With appropriate guidance, all these character traits can be made to work for our benefit.[85]

Accordingly, Bárdos' summary outlined what Hungarian state security should do: "1./ We must look into the appropriateness and options of a Western European publication of *Jesuits and Freemasons*. 2./ After the completed manuscript has arrived, final and careful proofreading must be performed together with the appropriate state and party organizations, and publishing must be prepared through our Czechoslovakian friends who took on this task/. 3./ We must prepare a long-term plan for his employment and organize his family's repatriation accordingly."[86]

Having received these promises, Nagy worked hard over the following months, submitting the completed chapters of *Church and Communism* to 'Guszti' one at a time.[87] Nagy assured him in his letters that "[I] have taken the comments into account, have included the list. [...] You hereby receive my written authorization, dear Guszti, to perform any further editing, omission, insertion at your discretion with my total approval. I feel we're very much on the same page regarding the basics, and you're free to modify the book as you wish. I want to honor you with this, and please take advantage of it, for it's what's in the best interest of the cause."[88]

This last sentence reflects Nagy's misunderstanding of their relationship: He was in the employ of Hungarian state security, not a colleague

85 *Report.* Budapest, July 3, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 75.
86 *Report.* Budapest, July 3, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 75–76.
87 *Töhötöm Nagy's letters to Gusztáv Bárdos.* Buenos Aires, July 29 and September 17, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 78–78/a. and 79–81. and *Report*. Buenos Aires, October 7, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 86–88.
88 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Gusztáv Bárdos.* Buenos Aires, September 17, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 79.

whose relationship to his handler would blossom into friendship. Bárdos was not the only 'editor,' and its content would be modified regardless of how Nagy felt. The end result satisfied Budapest, as was confirmed to the state security representative posted to the Buenos Aires Embassy: "...[w]e have read through the manuscript by Kirchenbauer, and are completely satisfied. Kirchenbauer has understood and correctly applied the points which make this publication practical and very useful. Our requests for minor but necessary changes and additions are set out in the annex."[89]

While Nagy worked in the latest requests, 1967 was drawing to a close. The delay in publication slowed down his family's repatriation, as the authorities would not permit the family's return until the book's release.[90]

Nagy was slightly disappointed; his family had wanted to spend Christmas "at home," in Budapest.[91] At the time, he could not have known that his books were part of an international intelligence undertaking, the aptly titled Operation Book (AO Kniha) which was a joint Hungarian, Czechoslovak, and Soviet project. While he was typing away, Bárdos and Fürjes liaised with their Czechoslovak and Soviet colleagues.[92] The first meeting took place in Prague, in early December 1967, the second between February 19 and 24, 1968 in Budapest, and a third directly preceding the operation's launch in Bratislava.[93]

Bárdos and Fürjes were joined at the Budapest meeting by Major Jiři Borecky of Department 8 of the Czechoslovak state security (StB), a Soviet advisor, and Colonel Sándor Rajnai, head of intelligence, i.e. Department III/1 of the Hungarian Ministry for Internal Affairs.[94] At the meeting, it was agreed that the Nagy's were to leave South America via Santiago, feigning a tourist trip to Chile, before traveling to Rome via London and

89 *Franz Kirchenbauer's case.* Budapest, November 21, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 89.

90 *Franz Kirchenbauer's case.* Budapest, November 21, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 89–90.

91 *Report.* Buenos Aires, December 4, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 99.

92 *Operation Book (AO Kniha).* Document in Czech. Prague, December 5, 1967. Archív Bezpečnostních Složek (henceforth ABS), f. I. správa MV., reg. č. 81067/102. 3.3.4. 187. (translated by László Végh. Thanks to my Czech colleague, Vladimír Petrilak, for bringing the document to my attention.)

93 On the Budapest meeting: *Memorandum.* Document in Czech. Prague, February 27, 1968. ABS, f. l. správa MV., 4.1.2. 59–63. (translated by László Végh)

94 Sándor Rajnai (1922–1994) was a police Colonel from 1961, Lieutenant General from 1968, and deputy head of Department III/I of the Hungarian Interior Ministry between 1967–1976. ÁBTL 2.8.2.1. (Files of secret and top-secret members of Group III/I. of the Ministry for Internal Affairs) 1037. For more on his career see Krahulcsán, *Pártállambiztonság*, 67–87.

Paris. Once in the Italian capital, they would temporarily stay with Nagy's Roman contacts. The plan called for Nagy to separate from his family—for security reasons—with his wife and daughter traveling to Piešťany in Czechoslovakia via Vienna before arriving in Budapest, after a few quiet weeks, without Töhötöm.

The StB had two responsibilities during the operation: Through Karel Beran ("Košek"), an StB agent in Vienna and journalist, the Frick Verlag (a publishing house) was infiltrated. This would organize publication of the German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons* and *Church and Communism.* The Czechoslovaks would also guarantee the Nagy family's security, from the moment they received their visa at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Vienna throughout their stay in Piešťany.[95]

Bárdos optimistically wrote about the plans for Nagy:

> At our initiative, the German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons*, a book exposing Mindszenty and his followers, is going to be published this year in Western Europe [...] His new book, *Church and Communism*, commissioned by us, and written with our guidance, is forthcoming in Spanish in South America, and in German and possibly other Western languages in Europe. It promises great success in exposing the conservative forces in the Vatican and may contribute to the strengthening of the progressive line within the Church and promoting the idea of socialism among the Catholic public. At home, his [Nagy's] literary activities will be useful in the struggle against clerical reaction, and in differentiated, effective, and professional propaganda.[96]

Owing to the growing interest of the Argentine secret service in Nagy, a conspiratorial operation was necessary. Various SIDE agents, making no effort to conceal their identities, tried to establish working relationships with Nagy owing to the mission they presumed he was on from the Vatican. Nagy did not categorically refuse these, instead listening with interest. According to a report from the Embassy, Hungarian authorities had to explain to him several times that his contacts with SIDE agents were dan-

95 *Report.* Budapest, March 18, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 105.
96 *Report.* Budapest, April 26, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 117–118.

gerous to both himself and their common cause. As the embassy wrote, "[a]fter multiple meetings, [Nagy] finally discovered, i.e. understood the danger his ties to SIDE pose. This is the important part, it's a side issue that he now emphasizes not initiating a relationship. The fact that Budapest Center confirmed this issue with Kirchenbauer, proved to be of great assistance. I believe Kirchenbauer was slightly romantic in this case, and tried to convince SIDE of the benefits of Communism."[97]

To resolve the situation and finalize Nagy's repatriation schedule, Bárdos again travelled to Buenos Aires.[98] He met Nagy at the Hungarian Embassy on January 30, 1968, laying out for him the detailed plan for his family's repatriation. To cover travel expenses, he gave Nagy $1,600 and $900 respectively, $2,500 in total, and informed him that he was to receive a further 18,000 schillings in Czechoslovak korunas from the Frick Verlag for the German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons.* Nagy later provided a receipt for these funds.[99] Several days later, Bárdos met Nagy's family in Tigre, a tourist destination near Buenos Aires. It was made clear that Nagy, his wife, and their daughter could only remain in contact through Bárdos from the moment they arrived in Vienna, and that it was Bárdos' responsibility to protect Paulina Pölöskey and Krisztina Nagy. The two of them would correspond with Lajos Bihary, Nagy's brother-in-law, while Nagy stayed in Rome, awaiting new assignments from the Jesuit Generalate and the Vatican.

On February 15, 1968, Nagy and his family travelled to Chile according to plan, and flew from there to London, arriving in Rome on April 8, 1968.[100] Nagy's stay there was funded by the Jesuits. From there, his wife and daughter travelled to Piešťany without complications, where they enjoyed the hospitality of their Czechoslovak hosts until early May.[101] Arriving in Budapest, they spent a few days at the "Budavár" apartment,[102] after which they would await Töhötöm at their three-room apartment

97 *Report.* Buenos Aires, December 4, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 98–99.

98 His courier duties lasted from January 26 to February 17, 1968. *Report.* Budapest, 18 March 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 101–107.

99 ABS, f. l. správa MV., reg. č. 81067/102. 3.3.4. 95. and *Report.* March 18, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 102.

100 *Report.* Budapest, May 9, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 128.

101 *Report.* Budapest, May 9, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 131.

102 They stayed in "Budavár" K-apartment between May 3–5, 1968. *Service ticket.* Budapest, April 29, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 121.

on Pusztaszeri Street, allocated to them by the state security authorities. Over the ensuing period, Nagy was given a job at the publishing house of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Akadémiai Kiadó,[103] the income from which was supplemented by 3,000 forints a month from state security. He signed receipts for these funds every month and year.

The repatriation aspects of Operation Book successfully concluded here, as Nagy would later recall during his arguments with the authorities: "Of course it would have been better if I had stayed, maintaining the most confidential relationship with those at home. But you worried about my freedom. I never worried. It was about doing more for the country at home."[104] Elsewhere he shared details of his journey home and the circumstances of his repatriation:

> [I] was abused by Hungarian expats, labeled a Communist, and denounced to SIDE, which interrogated me three times. I then booked my flight in Chile, not Buenos, and travelled to Chile with an identification card, rather than the passport with my Hungarian visa in it, leaving all my luggage in a freight forwarder's warehouse, to be sent two months later to the address of the Roman Jesuits. I had to actually escape, to avoid being arrested with passport and luggage. The accusation against me was that I had become a Communist owing to my book's harsh critique of Mindszenty. This notion was confirmed to every sane person by the fact that I didn't wander elsewhere, but home to Hungary, got a luxury apartment on Rózsadomb before half a million applicants, and a prestigious job at the Academy. It was the last straw for the Western Hungarian diaspora—who of course found all of this out—and I was deemed a Communist. I never once refuted it.[105]

Here, Nagy is not incorrect. The fact is that he declared his commitment to Socialist Hungary and its leading ideology, Marxism, on several different occasions:

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103 According to his calendar entry, he began working at Akadémiai kiadó on January 3, 1969. *Calendars, notebooks.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

104 *Building and developing Latin American connexions.* Budapest, April 20, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 196.

105 *Comments.* Budapest, August 31, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/8. 4–6.

> I hereby declare and put in writing that today I am an atheist, my opinion of the Church is that all its grand principles, the so-called Gospel truths are nothing more than a pure, ideal, and universal humanism. Conversely all that has accumulated on it over 2,000 years, and its current practice is a complete betrayal of this humanism. Still, I believe that many of the Church leaders wish to return to this basic humanism (they call it the Gospel). I am convinced that the people who believe in the Gospel, sincerely wish to realize this same humanism we call Marxism rather than the Gospel.[106]

These statements and the like were almost invariably made to state security, as declarations of loyalty.[107] We cannot fairly state that Nagy lied or made compromises to get certain benefits, such as facilitating his return home, since, as he wrote at the end of the above reminiscence: "I don't want to half belong to a cause I hold in high regard."[108] So, as in every previous stage of his life, he completely identified with his mission. All the same, he might not have shared everything on his mind with his current audience or readers.

The question remains, of course, as to exactly how much Nagy knew about what he was returning home to, and to what extent the motives influencing his decision played a part in his taking on the roles he did for the next decade, until his death in February 1979. As his former confreres mused with respect to his fate: "Töhi is a big time dreamer. He colors his fancies so vividly that they nearly become reality for him and he lives and dies for them... It's his nature, which may be the basis of many good things, but many more bad ones."[109]

106 *Report.* Budapest, April 20, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 185.
107 Similarly, e.g.: *Report.* Budapest, August 31, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 71–72.
108 *Comments.* Budapest, August 31, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/8. 6.
109 *Töhi and the Masonic problem.* Budapest, June 8, 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-40009. 55.

IX

Modus Vivendi Revisited

> *"And I work towards a modus vivendi, because, in a way, it's my profession. This is where my personal connections are, my past and my possibilities. And since I know that this people's democracy needs a certain compromise without forfeiting its principles—and I know very well how far these principles can go—I have volunteered for this role."*[1]

1.

As Nagy's repatriation became a reality, new vigor for a *modus vivendi* surfaced: He wanted to reevaluate the old possibilities, feeling something of an international thaw arising from Vatican II and the partial agreement that had been reached between Hungary and the Holy See. It was his desire to mediate the remaining contentious issues, as well as those which continued to cause friction between the Vatican, the Hungarian Church, and the Hungarian state. So, once more Nagy gathered and relayed news, visiting his Jesuit friends in Hungary, Austria, and Rome, all the while faithfully adhering to the *legend*[2] that he had returned home to spiritually develop and serve the twin causes of Hungary and the Church.[3]

In 1968 the relationship between Hungary and the Vatican, and the situation of the Church in the former, were regulated mainly by the partial agreement signed on September 15, 1964 between Hungary and the

1 *Report.* Budapest, August 31, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 72.

2 In state security jargon, a "legend" can refer to a bona fide explanation or cover for a clandestine operation, activity, or even persona. It is crafted from 'real' elements that are independently verifiable and outwardly plausible. See Gergely, *Állambiztonsági Értelmező Kisszótár*.

3 ÁBTL 4.9. H-6/15. Hungarian state security audio recording of Nagy made in Budapest on August 30, 1966.

Holy See.[4] This marked the resumption of official relations between the Vatican and Hungary following the expulsion of nuncio Angelo Rotta in 1945. The Interior Ministry's domestic counterintelligence department and a small residence operating in Rome dealt with the Vatican.[5] Hungarian state security activities in Italy during the 1950s were confined to general intelligence. Until the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, directly or even indirectly infiltrating the Vatican was widely seen in state security circles as impossible.[6]

With the election of Pope John XXIII, however, this trend in ecclesiastical policy changed. On January 25, 1959, the Holy Father announced at Saint Paul's Cathedral in Rome that he wished to reform the Church by calling a Roman diocesan synod, to be followed by a universal one.[7] His new Eastern policy, the so-called *Ostpolitik*, was expounded upon in *Pacem in terris*[8], an encyclical dated April 11, 1963. In rephrasing the Church's teaching to advocate greater equality and social justice, owing to the radical social changes of the last decades as well as his denunciation of the arms race, the new Pope made a deeply positive impression on the Socialist camp.[9]

Sensing the shifting situation, a new concept began forming in Hungary. Given the foreign policy ramifications, it was deemed beneficial in the long run for the Hungarian church to adhere to the Vatican's moderate line.[10] After the Soviet Union sanctioned this rapprochement, the Political Committee of the MSZMP consented to the participation of Hungarian Catholic Church representatives in the Second Vatican Council. According to the summaries prepared after the synod's first session, Hungarian delegates were welcomed by even the highest Vatican circles, something which proved to be significant for the state's ecclesiastical policy.

For its part and in order to overcome the deadlock in their own relations, the Holy See aimed to carefully capture the attention of Hunga-

4 On the text of the agreement see Balogh, Fejérdy and Szabó, "Az 1964-es magyar-szentszéki."
5 Bottoni, "Egy különleges kapcsolat," 258–59.
6 See Csorba, *A római magyar követ jelenti*, 195–99.
7 Szabó, Cs., *A Szentszék*, 20–25.
8 For the full text see Tomka and Goják, *Az egyház társadalmi tanítása*, 161–96.
9 Fejérdy, *Magyarország és a II. Vatikáni Zsinat*, 18–22.
10 Fejérdy, *Magyarország és a II. Vatikáni Zsinat*, 40–47.

ry's secular leadership by its actions towards the Hungarian ecclesiastical representatives. As such, it can be said that the first session of Vatican II served as something like a prelude to the negotiations between Hungary and the Holy See, which would not officially commence until spring 1963.[11]

Participating in negotiations was in both Vatican and Hungarian interests. The MSZMP held its 8th Congress between November 20 and 24, 1962, during which period it was declared that the foundations of socialism had been laid. János Kádár had regained power domestically by the early 1960s; however, insofar as foreign policy was concerned, and particularly with an eye to relations with the West, Hungary remained isolated. Foreign policy thus needed to take a more proactive approach, pursuing contact with the West on every and any level.[12] The existing isolation, largely a result of the 1956 Revolution's aftermath, had abated by 1963, especially following the restoration of Hungary's membership in the United Nations. Another portent of this was the restoration of diplomatic relations with the UK, France, and Belgium to the ambassadorial level in 1963, followed one year later by Sweden, Italy, Switzerland, and Canada. Negotiations with the Holy See were thus part of this larger trend.

The Holy See's rapprochement with the USSR and its satellites also benefited the Catholic Churches and their congregations in the countries involved. An end to the Soviet Union and communism was not yet foreseeable, leaving peaceful coexistence as the only viable option.[13]

Following the death of John XXIII, Pope Paul VI continued his predecessor's *Ostpolitik*. After the tentative journey of the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz König, Vice Secretary of the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli travelled to Hungary on May 9, 1963.[14] On the Pope's instructions, Casaroli negotiated with representatives of the Hungarian government in the course of three sessions, and after receiving the Holy Father's formal approval, he and József

11 Szabó, *A Szentszék*, 25.

12 Negotiations on normalizing relations also began between the Hungarian People's Republic and the USA, with the Hungarian issue eventually taken off the UN General Assembly's agenda. Borhi, *Nagyhatalmi érdekek hálójában*, 173–218.

13 Szabó, *A Szentszék*, 28–31.

14 Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 292.

Prantner, President of the State Office for Church Affairs, signed an agreement on September 15, 1964.[15]

The crux of this shift in church policy was twofold: First, the Vatican agreed to tolerate a certain level of collaboration with the communist regime, while, at the same time, it ceased overtly supporting resistance to the regime.[16] Until the removal of Mindszenty in 1971, his situation remained the only real area of contention in Hungarian-Vatican relations.[17]

Although negotiations between the parties continued after the partial agreement until the fall of Communism,[18] and it may have been thought in the Vatican that they had succeeded in resolving the Hungarian Catholic Church's difficulties in an exemplary fashion, the agreement signified more of a beneficial change in practice for the Hungarian party, and, by extension, the Hungarian People's Republic.[19] The partial agreement between the Holy See and Hungary was considered one of the Kádár regime's biggest foreign policy coups, as it affirmed the perception of Kádár's Hungary in Western circles as "liberal." Meanwhile, the Hungarian state's ecclesiastical policy was able, not only to monitor the Catholic Church's domestic activities, but also to influence them.[20]

In fact, intelligence against the Vatican became more pronounced during the 1960s.[21] Apart from the organizational unit in charge of the Catholic Church (Department III/III), which countered internal reaction, Department III/I, intelligence, grew to play an increasingly important role.[22] Indeed, starting in the mid-1960s, the Vatican, following the USA and West Germany, became the third highest priority for Hungarian intelligence.[23]

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15 On the documents of the negotiations see Szabó, *A Szentszék*, 152–64, 180–81, and Balogh and Gergely, *Állam, egyház, vallásgyakorlás*, 1027–29.

16 Gárdonyi, "Túlélés – együttműködés – ellenállás," 41, and Casaroli, *A türelem vértanúsága*, 123–71.

17 Balogh, "Ikonná dermedt emlékirat," 16, 2

18 Delegates of the Hungarian Government and the Vatican met 63 times between 1963 and 1977: 32 of these meetings were in Budapest, while 31 were in Rome. Soós, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal*, 176–85, and Soós, *Kádár János*.

19 Cf. Szabó, *A Vatikán*.

20 About the ambivalence of Ostpolitik in regard of Hungary, see: Dunn, *Détente*, 232–69.

21 Vörös, "Egyházak," 295; Vörös, "Hálózatok," and Vörös, "Állambiztonság."

22 Okváth, "Jelentés," 689–90; Bandi, "A magyar hírszerzés," 47–60.

23 On the importance of this see Haľko, "A Magyar és csehszlovák titkosszolgálat."

Leading Warsaw Pact intelligence service officials held a summit in Budapest from July 24 to 27, 1967, to discuss "[w]hat's to be done against the Vatican; steps to discredit the Vatican and its supporters and how to exacerbate conflicts inside the Vatican and between the Vatican and capitalist states."[24] Accordingly, a large-scale program was launched between 1968 and 1969, with the aim of placing informers in every important field of Vatican leadership. After the successful takeover of the Hungarian Papal Institute,[25] Hungarian state security was tasked with infiltrating every congregation, the Secretariat of State, and the monastic orders, foremost among them the Jesuits led by Pedro Arrupe.[26] This last effort was necessitated by their hostile view of the Jesuit Order as the center of Vatican "espionage."[27]

In consort with its domestic and Warsaw Pact counterparts, Hungarian state security also formed its own strategy for piercing the Vatican. These efforts had borne fruit by the early 1970s, being led until 1976 by Sándor Rajnai. After that, success continued all the way up to November 1989 under the leadership of János Bogye, who was fluent in Italian and Spanish.[28] Aside from developing a professional staff, the biggest secret of their success was the active recruitment and employment of individuals with clerical connections abroad, who had plausible reasons to travel to the West and engage in espionage at ecclesiastical centers or among émigré organizations.[29] Nagy was just such a person, whose tasks eventually shifted from disruption by publication to disinformation against the Vatican, as well as intelligence and counterintelligence activity. Nagy, mediator and harbinger of the new *modus vivendi*, was seen by state security

24 No record of this conference has been found by the author in Hungarian archives. Source of the quote: Andrew and Mitrohin, *A Mitrohin-archívum*, 651.

25 Bandi, "Adalékok," 189–05.

26 They did succeed, and as a result, gathered intelligence e.g., on the events at the center of the Jesuit Order, informing the partner organizations of socialist countries of these. *Information for the intelligence agencies of the Ministry for Interior of the Polish People's Republic.* Budapest, April 16, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-254/2. 202.

27 Fejérdy, "Az Államtitkárság," 374–406.

28 János Bogye (1931–?) was a Lt. Colonel, later Colonel in the police during Nagy's tenure as an agent. From 1971–1976, he led Sub Department III/I-3 of the Interior Ministry. Thereafter, he became deputy head of Department III/I, and deputy head of Department III. See: https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:13:::NO:13:P13_OBJECT_ID,P13_OBJECT_TYPE:895106,ELETRAJZ (Last retrieved: 31.10.2021.)

29 Vörös, *Egyházak*, 142.

as the facilitator of both informational and disinformation "channels." Still, he was constantly under surveillance and never above reproach. In addition to his reports and publications—as we will see—he participated in other activities, such as those directed against Freemasonry and South American countries.

2.

Nagy's visit home in 1966 and repatriation two years later in 1968 caused a sensation in Hungary among Jesuits who had remained together after the 1950 ban.[30] For his part, Nagy reported to the Hungarian authorities that, in Rome, "the Jesuit fathers at the Curia have literally 'written off' their confreres who stayed in Hungary as no longer usable people, who cannot be counted on. They believe that they froze in 1945, and time has passed them by."[31] As such, Nagy visited them questioningly, and was slightly unsettled by what he encountered.

Following his visit to his confreres living in the Pannonhalma abbey in 1966, which they called "holy prison" and the "silent internment camp," as well as his visit to Budapest,[32] several opinions about Nagy formed. Some thought that

> Töhötöm Nagy (Töhi) is the same old cheeky sort, who can't forget his Jesuit past, his heart still beats for the Society of Jesus, so, even if he is unaware, his every sentence is soaked in some kind of painful loss on the one hand, and self-justification on the other. Members of the Order welcomed him warmly, but with obvious reservations, because they didn't know why he had come. [...] His lay colleague of old expressed his opinion bluntly and without any spiritual depth: Töhi, you've always been an impostor and you still are.[33] The purpose of his visit is unclear.

30 The Jesuits did not accept the state's dissolution of their Order, and sought, as elsewhere, to conform to conditions within the country and accept the new political system, keeping in line with their traditional approach to repression. They adhered to the principle of "once a priest, always a priest," keeping in close contact even when scattered. Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 73–80.

31 *Report.* Budapest, May 31, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 151.

32 ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-40009. 181–83.

33 From another report, it is possible to determine that this colleague was Ferenc Magyar, from *Új Ember. Jelentés.* Budapest, August 17, 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-40009. 70.

> [...] There are uncontrolled whispers that Töhötöm Nagy is somehow involved in the resumption of negotiations between church and state.[34]

Provincial Superior Fr Ferenc Kollár[35] believed that "the Vatican wouldn't give an assignment to someone who is anti-clerical, a Mason," and firmly asked Nagy "not to disturb Jesuit confreres, if he doesn't want to cause a nuisance or discomfort."[36] Kollár's caution was justified; however, he likely had no idea that his words would be passed on to Hungarian state security. Nagy submitted a report concerning his conversations in Pannonhalma and Budapest with Fr Csávossy, Tüll[37] and Jenő Kerkai, as well as Fr Kollár, Fr Géza Süle[38] and Fr György Kerkai[39] He summarized their views on the relationship between the Church and state, the country, teaching divinity, collaborationist priests, and the everyday difficulties of the banned order.[40]

This was also the period when Nagy learned about the death of József Jánosi, which, according to an agent priest codenamed "Remete" (Hermit), unsettled him deeply.[41] "Remete's" job was to keep Nagy under surveillance. Nagy's former confreres told him that Fr Jánosi "went to Graz in 1947,[42] became a university professor there, switched to being a lay priest and held lectures as such. He would cross the border to an Italian village near the border to celebrate mass and return to the university on Mondays. He would still go there in 1965. He also mentioned to the local parish priest that he was about to write a memorandum at Casaroli's request on the state of the Hungarian Catholic Church and potential solutions,

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34 *Abstract of network report.* Budapest, September 8, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 15–16.

35 Ferenc Kollár SJ (1912–1978) was a Jesuit, and editor-in-chief of spiritual journal *A Szív* [The heart] between 1944 and 1951. Between 1955–1978, he served as Provincial Superior of the Hungarian Province. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 121.

36 *Abstract of network report.* Budapest, October 13, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 28.

37 Alajos Tüll SJ (1894–1987) was a Jesuit, imprisoned in 1950, taken to an internment camp in Kistarcsa, and imprisoned again in 1953. He lived in Pannonhalma from his release until his death. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 234–35.

38 Géza Süle SJ (1914–1988) was a Jesuit who was imprisoned between 1955 and 1957 in Vác. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 216.

39 György Kerkai SJ (1906–1985), was the younger brother of Jenő Kerkai and also a Jesuit. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 113.

40 *Report.* Budapest, August 27, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 33–43.

41 "Remete" was most likely Bertalan Bíró, a diocesan priest from Vác.

42 Actually, Jánosi emigrated on February 4, 1949 with István Barankovics, secretary general of the Democratic People's Party.

and sharply opposed Mindszenty's rigid policy. Fr Jánosi did complain to this parish priest that, while he was away for the weekend, someone would always rifle through his desk, his books etc., but leaving everything intact. When Casaroli first came there before returning to Italy, Jánosi prepared his manuscript (Jánosi was staunchly left-wing), and, the next weekend, took it with him in a briefcase. But he never reached the Italian village; he was thrown out of the train and found dead along the rails. His briefcase was sent back ten days later by the Italian railway company, noting that it was empty, and that they were sending it back on the basis of the business card found inside it."[43]

Nagy likely saw something in Jánosi's death that had an intelligence dimension, and which disconcerted him, given his own work in the same area. Despite his best efforts, most of Nagy's former confreres harbored suspicions about him, (rightly) believing that his apartment in Rózsadomb had been part of a "quid pro quo" with the state authorities.[44] Prior to this, familiarity with his book *Jesuits and Freemasons,* led them to note that "Töhi was an instrument for good in the hands of Kerkai back then, and now has become an instrument for evil in the hands of Freemasonry. I am more and more under the impression that he's being used as an agent to further their goals."[45] Later, speculations were made: "he might play the role of 'peritus' (expert) for the Party or the Police..."[46] Regardless of whether he was considered a Mason or a Communist, they agreed that "[i]t's a fact that he has an adventurous nature and won't sit quietly and silently at home. He is going to look for opportunities to act, and others are expecting this and will use him to achieve their goals."[47]

It certainly did not take state security long to find a use for Nagy. Police Lt. Colonel Emil Zalai,[48] head of Department III/III-1, called for

43 *Abstract of agent "Remete's" report of 15 September 1966*. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 18. Jánosi's accident happened near Friesenheim.

44 *Abstract of agent "Tömör's" [Solid] report.* Budapest, August 7, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 133. Agent "Tömör" was János Tamás SJ, a Jesuit (1915–1993) who became Provincial Superior from 1978–1984. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 225–26.

45 *Report.* Budapest, 8 June 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-40009. 55–57. And *Töhi and the Masonic problem.* Budapest, July 6, 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-40009. 58.

46 *Abstract of agent "Tömör's" report.* Budapest, August 7, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 133.

47 *Abstract of agent "Tömör's" report.* Budapest, August 7, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 133.

48 Emil Zalai (1922–2006) was a Lt. Colonel in the police around the time of Nagy's state security activities. He served as deputy head of the Interior Ministry's Department III/III-1.

"deepen[ing] the existing ideological conflicts between members of the Jesuit Order, start[ing] debates on some issues, exacerbate[ing] differences."[49] What role, if any, Nagy played in this is unclear; however, Nagy's file was attached to Zalai's draft.[50] Still, after 1968, the Hungarian Jesuits appear to have lost contact with Nagy, perhaps for their own or even his own protection, as the authorities also believed that intense interaction could prove risky. As a result, "for the sake of the conspiratorial situation, we kept the agent away from these circles,"[51] Nagy could, and did, continue to interact with members of the Society of Jesus in Rome and Austria,[52] as well as domestically, in the person of his old friend, Jenő Kerkai.

There is still no definitive answer as to whether Kerkai ever suspected Nagy of ties to Hungarian state security. From 1963, when they resumed their relationship, the two corresponded intensively. So much so that Kerkai was aware of Nagy's works in the *villas miserias* in Buenos Aires and wanted to see them.[53] He was delighted as to the success of *Jesuits and Freemasons*,[54] which presumably had a hand in his desire to return home. Nagy's new life goal of the pursuit of Soviet-Catholic rapprochement encouraged the pair to devise new joint plans. "My, or dare I say our, magnum opus will be to draft the rapprochement between the Church and Communism. We began our lives' works together, let's finish them together. A clear path: always reconcile, resolve differences, and fight

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He retired in 1972. See https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:13:::NO:13:P13_OBJECT_ID,P13_OBJECT_TYPE:875961,ELETRAJZ (Last retrieved: 10.11.2021.)

49 *Draft.* Budapest, 22 October 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 136. This is in accordance with the MSZMP's Political Committee's decree of 4 March 1968 on state of church policy and other tasks. Differences would be resolved not by crude intervention, but – in the spirit of "liberalization" – by ideological and political means. See Krahulcsán, *Pártállambiztonság*, 189–208.

50 Krahulcsán, *Pártállambiztonság*, 137–38.

51 *Summary report.* Budapest, April 14, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 8.

52 Nagy regularly visited Hungarian Jesuits living in Klagenfurt. His reports on them can be found in: ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 165/33–42., *Report.* Budapest, May 9, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 131. And *Report.* Budapest, May 13, 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 138–42. He listed his Jesuit contacts for the authorities, including their names, addresses, and short biographical snippets. *My Jesuit acquaintances I can count on.* ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 36.

53 *Jenő Kerkai's diary notes, 1965–1966.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/498. And Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai on planning the journey. Buenos Aires, May 1, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 108/86–87.

54 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* [Püspökszentlászló] August 30, 1964. OSZK Kt., f. 216/430. 1. Fol. Letter 3.

against prejudice and hatred,"[55] Nagy wrote to Kerkai in a letter before his visit home in 1966.

The only reaction that Kerkai offered was "Your intention to return home, my dear Sándor, may decide your fate."[56] This was enigmatic by design, in order not to reveal any information to the state security authorities reading their communiques. But for Nagy, whom Kerkai would greet with the phrase "My soul's other half!," it was an unequivocally clear invitation.[57]

However, state security did learn something of Kerkai's position from another source, codenamed "Barát" (Friend).[58] His reports noted how Kerkai hoped Nagy "[would] play a significant role in the Church's dialogue of synodal spirit and humanizing socialism. As a non-committed, but—socially, financially, and politically—pronounced left-wing persona, he was to play the biggest and most significant role of his life. Kerkai's life's dream would come true, if, through Töhötöm Nagy, pure ecclesiastical thought and unadulterated socialist thought could come closer to one another."[59]

In the summer of 1966, Nagy and Kerkai again met in person after a twenty-year separation. Two years later, Nagy summed up his impressions of Kerkai in a letter addressed to Andor Varga in Rome, but given, as a sign of trust, to his case officer in the "Budavár" apartment.[60] According to this report, after Nagy's visit to Pannonhalma, they had parted on uncertain terms because, according to Nagy, Kerkai "couldn't stomach that I had started a family, and was so far away." The two met once more in October 1968, this time in Győr, and spoke while Kerkai was waiting for a medical examination. At this meeting, their old friendship was resurrected, with Nagy remarking to Varga: "I felt very sorry for my poor old former collab-

55 *Letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Buenos Aires, May 1, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 108/89.

56 *Letter to Töhötöm Nagy.* Pannonhalma, June 22, 1966. OSZK Kt., f. 216/365. Letter 30. As Margit Balogh also emphasizes, Kerkai's letters and writings grew terser over time. Balogh, "Kerkai Jenő," 51.

57 See e.g., *Töhötöm Nagy's letters to Jenő Kerkai.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/236., or *Jenő Kerkai's letters to Töhötöm Nagy:* OSZK Kt., f. 216/365.

58 Agent "Barát" a.k.a. "Baráth" = Dr. Ágoston Takáts. Takáts was recruited on March 25, 1958 based on kompromat, or compromising material. State security authorities employed him mostly in targeting the Catholic Church and the Jesuit Order. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-26962/2. 47.

59 *Report.* Budapest, April 29, 1969. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-41644. 94.

60 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Andor Varga SJ.* Budapest, 10 December 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 153–156.

orator. He was frozen in time. Crippled. We had to take a break in the conversation after thirty minutes, because he couldn't take any more. [...] he has no desire to work, to do things, to organize. Put it this way: he would have, but now he knows that he's crippled and doesn't have much time left." Nagy thought one of the reasons Kerkai had asked to meet him was to make sure there was no "thorn," or ill will between the two, in case he died.

As a sign of reconciliation, Kerkai expressed a desire to meet Nagy's wife and daughter. Accordingly, Nagy invited him to their apartment in Pusztaszeri út, and the meeting took place in November 1968, as Kerkai was passing through Budapest. After this meeting, Nagy felt that Kerkai "was finished with the idea that the Church, in particular, a Jesuit could organize politically, to conspire to overthrow forms of society. The time and opportunity for this had passed."[61]

Kerkai again visited the Nagy family on his return trip, purportedly telling Nagy that his mission was not in Hungary, but "in a socialist society, because I was a revolutionary type, my place would be in South America among the young priests, they know me there, I would have authority, I could do great things."[62] This was another insight that deeply affected Nagy, and one that he would contemplate from time to time. At this meeting, Kerkai also told Nagy in strict confidence that, after the latter's visit to Pannonhalma in 1966, Fr Kollár and the others were convinced that Nagy had recorded their conversations, since "they could clearly hear the tape recorder's click, so he must have become a communist informer."[63] Kerkai wanted Nagy to know that this was the reason why the confreres had kept their distance, and, perhaps, it might have even been a warning to him. Nevertheless, Kerkai does not appear to have harbored any suspicions about his confreres being correct in their assumption.

3.

The counterweight to Kerkai's role and psychological significance in Nagy's life was Cardinal Mindszenty. Nagy and Mindszenty crossed paths at two significant junctures: First—as we have seen previously—in 1945–1946,

61 Ibid., 154.
62 Ibid., 155.
63 Ibid.

and again after 1966. Their relationship had always been asymmetrical. While in 1945 the freshly appointed head of the Hungarian church paid attention to the Jesuit, even if only marginally, and was instrumental in the direction that Nagy's life took, after Nagy's recruitment in 1966 and repatriation in 1968, there is no evidence that Mindszenty was even aware of Nagy's return. This time, the role played by Nagy would be one-sided: He actively participated in the state security disinformation campaign against Mindszenty.[64]

Despite his activities having been little more than an episode in the Cardinal's life, Nagy saw himself as much more: "I wasn't an eyewitness at the Cardinal's trial, however, I could have been a star witness."[65] This could, of course, have been justified by the fact that from 1945–1946, Nagy was an important actor in the church and political events which determined the Hungarian Catholic Church's direction after World War II. Through his participation in these, he had first-hand knowledge of Mindszenty's activities, decisions, and behavior. However, Nagy only began to use the phrase "star witness" *after* Mindszenty's trial, his prison term, and his actions during and following the revolution of 1956. The Cardinal's enforced stay at the US Embassy thereafter saw the "Mindszenty issue" remain unresolved for a prolonged period, during the latter part of which Nagy was tangled in the web of state security.

It is interesting, therefore, that Nagy's use of the term emphasizes not only his own role, but also the pressure to conform, as is common with collaborators of various status in contact with state security authorities. In this fashion, the cultural capital Nagy had accumulated (his network, his ecclesiastical expertise, and his relationship with Mindszenty) was put at the disposal of state authorities.[66] This is not surprising as Nagy's relationship with Mindszenty had been specifically emphasized in his recruit-

64 Two documentaries were made with Nagy, in which he emphatically and unambiguously condemned Mindszenty. *Nagy Töhötöm-interjú* [Interview with Töhötöm Nagy]. OSZK Collection of Historical Interviews 625., and *Egy jezsuita páter vallomásai egy hercegprímásról* [Confessions of a Jesuit priest about a Prince Primate]. OSZK Collection of Historical Interviews, Hungarian Motion Picture Treasure Collection 1441.

65 Töhötöm Nagy, *Mindszenty tegnap és ma* [Mindszenty yesterday and today]. ÁBTL III.-1.8. 33, and Töhötöm Nagy, *Korfordulón*, 406.

66 Cf. Bourdieu, *The Social Structures*, 194–95. On state security's use and abuse of cultural capital see e.g., Slachta, "Unofficial Collaborators," 309–28.

ment proposal: In reference to *Jesuits and Freemasons*, the proposal's writer notes that "the harsh critique of Mindszenty as a proponent of Habsburg restoration and an enemy of every sort of societal progress plays a prominent role."[67] Thus, Nagy's anti-Mindszenty position, if not exclusively from either party, nonetheless significantly contributed to his appreciation in the eyes of state security. Nagy thus handled this contact with great emphasis and highlighted it throughout.

A sense of his own importance and desire to meet the authorities' expectations were not the only factors that influenced Nagy to self-identify as a star witness. His own personal trauma also played a role.[68] His defining role in KALOT,[69] his crossing of the frontlines in 1944,[70] and his journeys to Rome between 1945 and 1946[71] had fueled his belief that he was an "historical actor." Around the time of Mindszenty's appointment, it briefly seemed that the Prince Primate counted on and even needed Nagy's confidential services. However, the quick escalation of the conflict between the two, culminating in Nagy's transfer to South America and departure from the Jesuit Order, could, in Nagy's mind, be seen as a product of the Cardinal's direct decisions and actions.

In Nagy's view, Mindszenty had not only caused the dramatic shift in his own life, but also the failure of *modus vivendi* and progressive Catholic policy in general. Thus, Nagy had no difficulty in gradually assigning to him all those negative characteristics that Hungarian state security desired and used in their anti-Mindszenty policy and campaigns. After 1966, Nagy, rather than Mindszenty himself, became a victim of his anti-Mindszenty-ism.

Through the psychological process of intellectualization, trauma, a culmination of a difference in principle manifesting in an ever-present conflict, permanently became a conflict between the social "revolutionary"

67 *Proposal.* Budapest, September 7, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/1. 41.

68 Regarding the conflict between Mindszenty and Nagy, Jenő Gergely questions how two of the Cardinal's proponents, József Cavallier and Nagy, could so quickly come into conflict with him. Despite differences between the two cases and the fragmentary nature of sources, it can be said that Nagy's experience was by no means unique. Gergely J., "Magyarország és a Szentszék," 275.

69 On this see chapter *"Töhötöm Nagy and KALOT."*

70 On this see chapter *"Either Side of the Front."*

71 On this see chapters *"Rome! My one earthly love!"* and *"The Third Rome."*

of Catholic inculturation[72] and the conservative high priest. Nagy's statements from the time evidence a number of colorful flourishes, reflecting his personality both verbally and in writing: He constantly stressed his role and reinterpreted stories from his youth, both distancing himself from and fictionalizing his experiences. This proclivity for myth-making noticeably complicates the process of finding something akin to historical truth, as subjective experience and actual events are fused, with the disparity between the two bridged by theoretical and ideological reflections. One reason for this is that while in South America, Nagy was no longer in direct contact with Mindszenty, learning about the Cardinal's fate and statements from secondary sources, which he then extrapolated further.[73]

For this reason, Nagy's case officer complained about the dwindling quality and objectivity of his writing on Mindszenty: "[t]he book supplemented with new chapters is inferior to the original. The new parts weren't written from KŐMŰVES' own experience. He reaches muddled theoretical conclusions from unfounded, unscientific hypotheses. He arbitrarily magnifies certain events, glosses over or simply creates other, equally important circumstances. Operatively, the most problematic chapter is the one about Mindszenty."[74]

Nagy did not leave behind a single, coherent memoir, instead expressing his views on Mindszenty several times in different places. From his repatriation until his death in 1979, he wrote books, supplemented and reworked what he had published, appeared in a documentary,[75] and contributed numerous reports and summaries to the authorities, in which

72 This is how the thread running through Nagy's life is described by Ferenc Jálics SJ, who met him in Argentina in the 1960s. *Interview with Ferenc Jálics.* Tahi, July 22, 2015. By Éva Petrás. Ferenc Jálics (1927–2021) is a Jesuit, theologian, university professor, and spiritual leader. On his life see Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 102.

73 Nagy's written estate from Rome contains a number of newspaper clippings pertaining to Mindszenty. Among other topics, Nagy collected Hungarian and foreign language articles on Mindszenty. In addition, he gathered information about the Cardinal's participation in the activities of the Hungarian emigration, later by using his network of contacts of Roman and domestic Hungarians. Töhötöm Nagy, *The Mindszenty case.* ÁBTL III.-1.8.

74 This remark refers to the manuscript *Korfordulón* [At the turning point of an era], the main subject of which is the Cardinal's historical role. *Report.* Budapest, June 23, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 228.

75 We can only gauge the significance of the pitfalls of publication vs. non-publication if we take into account the limits and characteristics of social, political, and scientific publicity in the Kádár era. See Köbel, "Szólásszabadság," 123–92.

the Cardinal played a leading role, repeatedly emerging as a sort of leitmotif. In many of these, Nagy presents himself as a historical actor, vindicated by the passing of time.

Thus, a structural fiction arose alongside Nagy's self-fiction—the image of a social revolutionary. History had rendered judgment on Mindszenty, and vindicated him. He said that "the Zala Lama"[76] belonged to the past, borrowing a term allegedly from Kerkai, to refer to someone "who represents in vain a world closed down for good."[77] In his piece *Az egyház helyzete és lehetőségei Magyarországon* (The state of and possibilities for the Church in Hungary), he specifically references Mindszenty, who "[f]ound it timely at the end of a lost war, in the presence of Soviet tanks, to work for a Habsburg restoration, to secretly organize a new government he himself had put together, to bring to war every beaten force, and to put the Hungarian Church in mortal danger for a reactionary, non-gospel, political goal, that apart from him, only a handful of members of the old ruling class wanted anymore, and not even all of them."[78]

At the 'court of history,' Nagy was a self-proclaimed star witness against Mindszenty, stating with conviction what the Cardinal's accusers had not even dared to, namely that "[t]he accusation was true, it was proven, so the judgment was just and final."[79]

Although, on the one hand, Nagy did have valid grievances against the Cardinal on a personal level, his later statements seem motivated more by

76 This is a play on the Hungarian city where Mindszenty had first served as a religion teacher and later priest, Zalaegerszeg and a tongue-in-cheek reference to the '14th Dalai Lama', who was forced into exile, likewise by (Chinese) Communists in 1959. Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 128.

77 *Report.* [no place.] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 100/1.

78 *Az egyház helyzete és lehetőségei Magyarországon. Reflexiók Mindszenty Emlékiratai megjelenése alkalmából* [The state of and possibilities for the Church in Hungary. Reflections on the publication of Mindszenty's Memoirs]. Budapest, November 20, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 52–53.

79 Töhötöm Nagy, *Mindszenty tegnap és ma* [Mindszenty yesterday and today]. ÁBTL III.-1.8. 33, and Töhötöm Nagy, *Korfordulón,* 420. Nagy's thoughts on the Mindszenty trial were likely influenced by his meeting with Vilmos Olti, about whom he reported to the authorities as a prospective agent: "I also spoke with dr Vilmos Olthy, another old friend and colleague in the Szeged corporative movement, where he was our legal counsellor, and served as judge at the Mindszenty trial. He told me many interesting details about the trial, and it's fair to say, I was shocked not only by Mindszenty's blindness, but also by the decency and seriousness with which Olthy and others tried to conduct this trial in an orderly manner, the latter of which had a positive effect on me." *Report.* Budapest, August 29, 1966. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 54.

a sort of ex post facto satisfaction and vindictiveness. His renewed pursuit of *modus vivendi*, beginning in the mid-1960s, can be traced to his structural fiction, which ultimately also drove his repatriation. Within this constellation, Nagy rethought his relationship to the Cardinal.

The new *modus vivendi* could only be justified if Nagy ignored the Church's persecution in Hungary after 1948, including that of his dear friend, Kerkai among others. To accomplish this, Nagy ascribed these to the evils of the Rákosi, régime rather than to the system itself. Beginning rather broadly, he writes, "The fact is that Communism has become a permanent reality around the globe. [...] Communism, which they themselves call socialism now, for its original, brittle form proved unrealizable, shows no sign whatsoever of being overthrown."[80]

In summarizing the results of Socialist Hungary, Nagy contrasts the Kádár and Rákosi eras, voicing his sympathy:

> [Hungary] became a Communist state out of a completely feudal-capitalist one with no transition, breaking the evolution. It follows logically that this could only have been accomplished through violence. These are historical facts, which may have been unfortunate [...] but Saint Stephen used the same violence to convert Hungarian pagans to Christianity. Every revolutionary change so far has been characterized by violence, bloodshed, persecution, and an unmeasurable number of victims. This is exactly what happened in Hungary: entire social strata were swept away, new people came into leading positions who changed the very structure of society. Such a change cannot be realized without terror. [...] Revolution is a storm, not a quiet spring shower. This state of tension is like a medical operation: it hurts, it bleeds, the patient gets cut, stabbed, but it doesn't last long. In Hungary, it lasted 11 years, until 1956.[81]

Nagy continues: "The complete breakdown of relations with the Church can be attributed to the general terror and series of mistakes." Much of this was owing to Mindszenty's "exacerbating role, which was just cata-

80 *Az egyház helyzete és lehetőségei Magyarországon,* 53–54.
81 *Report.* Budapest, September 8, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 90.

strophic in times of crisis, when, instead of a sober Realpolitik, all of his behavior was driven by the most impossible daydreams and connected with the vital issues of the Hungarian Church." Contrasting his new role with Mindszenty's, he concludes that "Our historical task isn't to annihilate Socialism, as that is impossible today, but to guide it towards the eternal human norms. "[82]

Once again, the main impediment to the new *modus vivendi* was Mindszenty, whose position remained unresolved long after the partial agreement between Hungary and the Holy See.[83] To Nagy, proclaiming the new *modus vivendi* which aimed to "compromise" and "reconcile" increasingly meant communicating the Hungarian state's interests and even countering Mindszenty.[84] Nagy outlined the Hungarian side's position in a document for a foreign embassy: "The biggest obstacle in settling the relationship between the Hungarian State [sic!] and the Vatican is the Mindszenty issue. Even though the Mindszenty trial took place during the time of the so-called 'show trials,' the Hungarian state maintains that the condemnation of Cardinal Mindszenty was just, since he was found guilty of an offence against the law on the defense of the People's Republic. This is why it considers it fair to request that the Vatican modify its stance from the 1950s, as it has revised many positions of the 'cold war' era..."[85]

For Nagy, the anti-Mindszenty struggle became one of the most important causes and goals of his collaboration with Hungarian state security, far exceeding mere theoretical analyses. To this end, he revised *Jesuits and Freemasons,* substantially adding to its German edition. The book's new edition would prove that its critique of Mindszenty did not just stem from the haphazard nature of the distorting perspective of the contemporary, but from an orchestrated anti-Mindszenty campaign launched by the state security service. Indeed, the book was published in German by the Frick Verlag in Vienna as part of Hungarian state security's disinformation and propaganda campaign against the Cardinal.[86] As early as 1967, Nagy pressured Hungarian state security to help him publish a for-

82 *Report.* Budapest, September 8, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 100.
83 Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 1202–6.
84 *Report to a South American embassy.* [Budapest] ca. 1974. OSZK Kt., f. 216/93. 39.
85 *Report to a South American embassy.* [Budapest] ca. 1974. OSZK Kt., f. 216/93. 38.
86 Nagy, *Jesuiten und Freimaurer.*

eign language edition: "One more argument: Jesuits and Mas. [sic!] murders Mindszenty. When do we want it out? He's a sick old man, can die any week. After the glorious news of his death, after a potentially noisy funeral? [...] Now! Today is the time to publish this book."[87]

The work's publication was delayed, however, for reasons that neither Nagy nor Hungarian state security could control: Nagy and his family were repatriated in 1968, however, the book was not published until 1969. Nagy could not possibly have known that the defection of Karel Beran, a participant in Operation Book, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the subsequent termination of the relationship between the StB and the Frick Verlag, all of which were interwoven, had impacted his book's publication.[88] Each of these factors also help explain why Nagy's other book project in German, *Church and Communism*, was delayed.

In the fall of 1968, according to Takáts ("Barát"), he optimistically told his acquaintances that he was "[h]appy to show the most recent brochure of the Fricke [sic!] company of Vienna, meaning the publication of his book in German [...] The possibility of publication has grown uncertain over the past few months, but at the moment, chances are good that it will be published anyway. [...] For the book on *Jesuits and Freemasons*, Fricke even obtained clerical approval from the office of Cardinal König of Vienna, but this will not appear in print. Today we have reached the point where the Church's approval might hinder the work's success on the book market."

Takáts noted to state security what Nagy thought of the delay:

> What makes this Vienna edition unlikely?—Two points. The first one loomed from the direction of the Church, when Pope Paul published his encyclical against contraception. It could not have been known whether the rigid, conservative trend would prevail, leading to isolation. His book would have been undesirable in this case for several reasons. These are: a progressive, left-wing stance calling for dialogue—anti-Mindszenty-ism—and a certain sympathy towards the Soviets arising from personal experience. The last of these relates to the neg-

87 *Notes on the French edition of Jesuits and Freemasons.* Buenos Aires, May 22, 1967. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 70.

88 Ultimately, the publishing house politely declined to publish *Church and Communism*. Wien, April 30, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/4. 97/1.

> ative climate in the West owing to the events in Czechoslovakia, and the Cold War mindset. This also threatened to make his book untimely and delay its publication.[89]

As the above illustrates, Nagy appears to have sought an explanation in politics and Church policy without ever comprehending the real reasons for the delay(s). Furthermore, it is unlikely that Cardinal König's office approved, let alone sanctioned his work. Hungarian state security material only reveals its desire to use the book's publication to disinform Cardinal König and influence the Western public. Cardinal König considered his visits to Hungary as Archbishop of Vienna legitimate *Besuchspolitik* (visitation policy). He was an unofficial, albeit formidable, emissary between the Vatican and the Hungarian Church, as well as the Vatican and Mindszenty.[90] For these reasons, disinformation against him was important to state security, with the German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons* intended as part of a larger campaign.

"Barát" reported to his acquaintance that

> [t]hey talked a lot with Töhötöm Nagy, the relationship with whom was getting warmer and warmer. [...] [Nagy] said that his book 'CHRISTIANITY-COMMUNISM' was also published in Chile after Argentina,[91] and his work 'JESUITS AND FREEMASONS' in Vienna in German.—[Nagy mentioned that to his knowledge, the Viennese Cardinal KÖNIG was looking forward to the book's publication, since the Cardinal was allegedly attacked several times due to his behavior and stance towards Mindszenty, and expected the book by Töhötöm Nagy to inform the Austrian public objectively about Mindszenty's case.][92]

According to a handwritten comment, the above section was deemed so important that it was forwarded to the intelligence department focus-

89 *Report.* Budapest, 11 November 1968. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/2. 129–130.

90 König objected to any suggestion that he was a diplomat, emphasizing that official visit can only be made by members of the Vatican Secretariat of State and legates, of which he was neither. Pallagi, "A Mindszenty név," 879.

91 This is incorrect: *Church and Communism* was published in Chile, but never in Argentina.

92 *Report.* Tatabánya, May 27, 1969. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-41644. 92.

ing on the Vatican, Israel, and ecclesiastical emigration. An intelligence residency under the codename *Világosság [Daylight]* had been created in the State Office for Church Affairs (SOCHA) in November 1968. Under SOCHA's cover, which enjoyed a stronger position in the Vatican than the Foreign Ministry, it could collect intelligence through international ecclesiastical organizations.[93] As a result, the German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons* received the attention of the disinformation section of state security as material influencing Mindszenty's perception in the West and the Vatican by way of Cardinal König.

We do not know on what information Nagy based the claim that Cardinal König had approved his German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons*; however, in analyzing the version published in 1969, many additions and rewrites were included. The authorities did not ask Nagy to construct events or add new analyses, but to take a harsher and more decisive tone. Of course, Mindszenty was depicted less favorably, and the Soviets and Hungarian Communists more positively.

Nagy, however, also modified several passages that had nothing to do with Mindszenty directly: In the Austrian/German edition he saw an opportunity to work on his manuscript, which he considered to be a malleable raw material, rather than a final opus. At around the same time, Nagy was also working on several other manuscripts, all of which he expected would be published. Among these was his anti-Mindszenty work, the recently-finished manuscript for *Korfordulón* [At the turning point of an era], which would appear in a separate volume. The German edition of *Jesuits and Freemasons* was the first product of his collaboration with state security, and it could not significantly differ from the Hungarian version. For that reason, he only shifted the text's emphasis, rather than rebuilding its framework.[94]

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93 On the Világosság residency see Szabó and Soós, *"Világosság"*; Szabó, "A 'Világosság' fedőnevű"; Soós, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal*, 169–74.

94 A detailed comparison is beyond the scope of this book, however, a few examples can be provided. Page 208 of the Hungarian version says that the Russians were "anything but patient," whereas the German version instead references the "moderate segment of the Soviets." In *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek* [1965], 208, and Nagy, *Jesuiten und Freimaurer*, 217. Similarly, the first mandate letter Nagy received from Mindszenty in September 1945 is not mentioned in the German version, while the Hungarian version quotes it verbatim: "Mindszenty handed over a hand-written letter to His Majesty. Here's the letter: 'Your Majesty! As most graciously appointed Primate of Hungary, I have the honor to send to

Nagy's plans to publish in Hungary would not be realized, even though he did write new chapters for *Jesuits and Freemasons* that would be included in a future Hungarian edition. In the interim, however, the position of the Hungarian People's Republic towards Mindszenty shifted, particularly in the aftermath of his death in 1975. Hungarian state security determined that publication should be delayed as it "harms our ecclesiastical political interests." Nagy's case officer reported on the difficulties that this created in handling his agent:

> [I] tried convincing him about the Mindszenty chapter, it is not the time to raise the issue again: it would be confusing from an ecclesiastical and political point of view. I expressed my conviction that presumably the Vatican wouldn't take too kindly to the Mindszenty issue being brought up again, and the expected press coverage would upset the existing relationship. Despite my arguments, KŐMŰVES insisted on submitting his book to the publisher [Kossuth] with the new chapters. He stated that if the publisher doesn't take on the additions, he wouldn't approve of the book's publication. [...] Raising the issue isn't timely, and as hostile émigrés, and conservative ecclesiastical circles, also in opposition to the Vatican have joined forces for the canonization of Mindszenty, a writing condemning both Mindszenty's person and his activities would surely provoke attacks from them. KŐMŰVES, driven partly by his personal grievances, writes unequivocally and condemningly of Mindszenty, but is also unable to detach himself from his emotions when dealing with the subject. His knowledge is one-sided, his bias obvious. His writing techniques aren't adequate to tackle such a complex issue. His method is to cause outrage by one-sided, journalistic writing. This can be seen in his strong temperament and attitude. Considering his own, frequently mistaken hypotheses objective, he doesn't aim to check them, but to justify them at any cost.[95]

Your Majesty with my profound reverence, reports and requests, Fr Nagy SJ'" In Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 208. Finally, in the Hungarian version, Mindszenty broaches the subject of monarchy during discussions with Nagy in September 1945, while in the German version, Nagy solicits Mindszenty's opinion on the topic.

95 *Report.* Budapest, June 23, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 227–28.

The above shows that Nagy even exceeded the expectations of the authorities regarding Mindszenty. He remained obstinate because he knew that his manuscript had successfully made it abroad, having been couriered by his daughter, and that he could trust that it would be published.[96] He was, however, perhaps too clever for his own good, as the letter to Krisztina in which he asked her to begin the publication process was intercepted by Hungarian state security, and his plans came to naught.[97]

Of course, Nagy's world view and mindset are products of his life and personality; Mindszenty's role in either of these, even if important, is just one of many. Their hostility haunted Nagy well after the Cardinal's death and tormented him for the remaining 4 years of his life. It influenced his outlook and his intentions, sometimes overtly, while only latently influencing that of others. In this way, without ever being aware of it, Mindszenty had become the main antagonist in Nagy's life, driving his actions and thoughts.

96 "So, they put a muzzle on me, tie me to the doghouse, and even toss me a morsel. [...] now it seems they're permanently killing me as a writer. [...] For my part, this is my decision: the book may be published, and if it is, let it be with the additions. [...] So let the book come out, let it be published, and brought to life." *Töhötöm Nagy's letter 39. to his daughter.* Budapest, July 24, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 263/4. and 263/5.

97 Ibid. 228.

X.

Again in Action: The "Three-day Case" and "Infernal Solitaire"

> *"It would have been much more useful to be persecuted and to sit in prison than at the editorial office of the Lexicon of World Literature, since at either of the former, I could have inspired many. I never chose a bourgeois and peaceful life. Now, this lexicon is like an herbarium, I collect and identify long dead, pressed authors. And all the while, there are immense opportunities for me to join the great American rebellion."*[1]

1.

Following his repatriation, Nagy began working at Akadémiai Kiadó, a publishing house, editing the Lexicon of World Literature. Parallel to this, he continued writing and frequented events held at many South American embassies, among them, the Argentine representation in Budapest. He established good contacts, which were used partly to obtain additional income, but also to inform Hungarian authorities. In the summer of 1970, he met Fernández, chargé d'affaires at the Argentine Embassy, who eventually asked him to compile a press review for Argentina. Nagy accepted after clearing the offer with Subdepartment III/II-1/b (South American affairs). His embassy contacts developed promisingly, partly due to the fortunate circumstance that Alfredo Cipriano Pons Benítez, the Argentine Ambassador accredited to Budapest in 1971, knew Nagy from university

1 *Building and developing Latin American contacts.* Budapest, April 20, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 196.

circles in Buenos Aires.[2] In writing about his family, he said "They completely accepted us as 'Argentinos.'"[3]

Nagy also built fruitful contacts at the Peruvian and the Venezuelan representations, which made his person even more valuable to the authorities, since it provided an opportunity to monitor and influence the activities of those embassies.[4] For a brief period, it seemed as though he had reached his goal: To attain an intellectual position in his civilian life while engaging in satisfying secondary work in accordance with his sense of mission.

Through Fernández, Nagy learned that an Argentine cultural delegation led by Fr Mariano N. Castex SJ was to come to Hungary. As Nagy discovered, Fr Castex had been President General Onganía's confessor.[5] Of course, Nagy informed the authorities of this in dramatic language, stating how "Onganía clung to his arms when he left Casa Rosada, as he was overthrown during the last coup."[6] Nagy accompanied Fr Castex and the embassy staff throughout the former's visit to Hungary, informing him about the situation in Hungary, including that of the Catholic Church, during their conversations. According to the 37-page report produced about these events, the authorities found his developing relationship to Fr Castex very important, since it opened the door for Nagy to utilize his South American ecclesiastical contacts. In fact, on more than one occasion, he himself proposed that he be used in precisely this fashion.

Kerkai had drawn Nagy's attention to ecclesiastical developments in Latin America for a reason. However, the latter saw it as part of his state security work, and, having gathered enough information, submitted a draft entitled *Building and Developing Latin American Contacts.*[7] In it, he proposed a Hungarian operation utilizing the South American churches, "An especially ecclesiastical, priestly Communism! It doesn't even sound

2 *Summary report on South American embassies.* Budapest, April 4, 1976. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054/1. 84–85. On Benítez: *Alfredo Cipriano Pons Benítez.* Budapest, April 3, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 82–88.

3 *The Argentine Embassy.* Budapest, July 26, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 133.

4 *Summary report.* Budapest, April 14, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 6–11.

5 *Summary report.* Budapest, April 14, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 9.

6 *The visit to Hungary of Fr Castex and his Argentine companions.* Budapest, October 22, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/3. 16–54.

7 *Building and developing Latin American contacts.* Budapest, April 20, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 182–97.

bad. They'll write libraries against us, maybe wage war."[8] In analyzing the course of events in South America, he reached the following conclusion,

> [f]rom the point of view of the rebellion, there are two liberation movements today in South America: a classical Communist one and an ecclesiastical flavored left-wing one. The first isn't entirely 'classic', because it's deeply interwoven with a national uprising in the strict sense: the international can hardly be separated from the anti-North American, emphatically national, even nationalistic liberation struggle. [...] The other left-wing movement is ecclesiastical in nature: it's much younger than the other, but it's already much stronger, with more promise for the future, more unity, more supranational, more continental, and so, paradoxically, closer to the international spirit. My first practical statement is this: if they, the people of the two directions can join hands for a common goal today, then we can do so as well, but since we are a very stigmatized and isolated left, we cannot overtly do this. They wouldn't believe us separately. Help for expressly Communist parties is not my competence. So, I'm sticking to revolutionary movements of an ecclesiastical nature.[9]

Nagy proposed the creation of a news agency which he would supply with pamphlets, to be followed by the formation of an intellectual circle that would act as a "cultural association." Hungarian state security could determine content and control the operation from behind. He also promised a longer study on the subject, and submitted an outline a month after proposing his initial plan.[10]

In the course of joint planning, however, it became clear that the interest of the Hungarian People's Republic in such activities was not in the South American countries in and of themselves, but, rather, as tools to be leveraged against the United States by exploiting and inflaming anti-US sentiment. The level of investment and risks to Hungary had to be assessed in this context. Nagy's plans were later revised to reflect this:

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8 *Building and developing Latin American contacts,* 182–83.
9 *Building and developing Latin American contacts,* 189.
10 *Outline of a Major Study on Latin America.* Budapest, May 25, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 198–207.

"He is aware that our goals aren't directed against the Latin American countries, but, together with them, against the USA."[11] Accordingly, in his detailed analysis, Nagy framed his ideas so that they would be conducive to the geopolitical goals of state security. He saw the Achilles heel of the United States, not in the Vietnam War, or even Southeast Asia, but rather, in Latin America, where they "would attack the already weakening American life at its roots."[12]

The Church's social and political involvement, attributable to "liberation theology," and which Nagy had personally encountered in South America, was also appreciated by Kerkai, who offered an opportunity for the Socialist bloc to ideologically penetrate South America and exploit the continent against the USA. Nagy argued that

> [t]he Church stands with the aggressive, bomb-throwing American army, why can't it stand with the South American guerillas? Is there any difference between state-produced bombs and home-made ones? If the American army blows up a bridge, a Catholic priest can stand among the people blowing it up as an Army chaplain—he may even help his compatriots!—because they're on a mission; but a Catholic priest can't stand around when guerillas blow up a bridge because it's terrorism? [...] This double standard is the pinnacle of deceitful pharisaism [hypocrisy/self-righteousness – É.P.].[13]

From then on, Nagy dived into planning with fanatical devotion, as his case officer noted: "Believe me, I am aware of the importance of our joint effort, the 'loosening policy' which we direct towards a continent, I am happy to be a humble part of this. If you want proof of my devotion, tell me to kill Nyisztor, I'll do it tomorrow. More people are killed in Vietnam with the Pope's blessing. Or send me back to the 'Society of Jesus' with a mission. I'll do it! Just wait until my wife dies. She hasn't got much time left."[14]

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11 *Assessment report.* Budapest, November 28, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 42.
12 *Outline of a Major Study on Latin America.* Budapest, May 25, 1970. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 198.
13 *Outline of a Major Study on Latin America,* 202.
14 *Assessment report.* Budapest, November 28, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/4. 45.

Even if Nagy's willingness to sacrifice those dear to him who were still living should not be taken entirely seriously, the passion he demonstrated illustrates how he would gladly have exchanged his editorial office job for field work, as the former matched his ambitions less and less. At the same time, his exaggerated statements reveal that he desperately sought to affirm his loyalty to *modus vivendi,* proving his "devotion" not only to the authorities, but also to himself.

All of this may have been a sign that Nagy was becoming increasingly aware of the limits of his situation and career in Hungary, and desired to return to South America, following Kerkai's recommendation of a few years previous. Of course, his mission there would not have been exactly what his friend, probably unaware of his state security career, had suggested. Nagy's desire to return to South America is unmistakable in the ideas he proposed to his case officers: They offered no support, and Nagy himself went on to deny any such intentions vehemently and at length.[15] This disappointment made him conscious of the limits of his confinement, while, in reaching the leash's end, he became aware of its existence. He rephrased Kerkai's earlier observation: "Maybe it was hasty of me to return, I could have done more for the great common goal back there." Concluding, mostly to himself, he continues, "But now I'm here, and must reckon with this fact."[16]

Under the circumstances, Nagy had no one left to turn to or confide in. While he was exceeding every state security expectation and trying to prove his worth, Jenő Kerkai died in Pannonhalma, aged 66.[17] Having lost the chance to return to South America, and, at the same time, Kerkai's support, Nagy found himself isolated. He sought to escape his grief and to stabilize his situation with a gigantic undertaking, writing "What to do? I am going to make use of every technique of my Jesuit upbringing, and I see clearly that, despite all the glaring facts, this is mainly a spiritual crisis, which can only be overcome by willpower, and I will overcome it. [...] I will sail on willpower and resolution, with intellectual insight shining

15 *Report.* Budapest, April 22, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 95–98.

16 *A few of my personal issues. A conversation with József Lukács.* Budapest, July 30, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/3. 57.

17 *Obituary.* Pannonhalma, November 8, 1970. OSZK Kt., f. 216/491. And *Jenő Kerkai's eulogy.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/492.

a light behind, showing that this is the only way out if I am the only person to trust, and I am left to my own devices by the nature of the matter."[18]

So, clinging to memorized snippets of Ignatian spiritual exercises, Nagy expanded his field of action to a global scale, exploring ecclesiastical opportunities for exploitation beyond South America, and formulating a grandiose proposal for the authorities to exploit the international position of the Catholic Church.

2.

"Beloved sons and daughters, now that we've visited our flock and those who are all dear brothers across several continents, we have gained such experience and learned such things, that make us turn to you, listening to our conscience, wherever you may live and are citizens of this entire world.

We're used to the fact that, after major natural disasters, people unite, driven by the power of love, and, at a severe financial sacrifice, rush to the aid of those in need. But where is the earthquake, where is the flood, or wildfire that would cause as much damage and unfathomable suffering as modern warfare with its inhumane bombings and systematic destruction? Earthquakes subside, floods recede, but wars putting natural disasters to shame go on for years uninterrupted. Where is the conscience of humanity that it hasn't rebelled against this? The logical goal of the world is peace; peace is an instrument of progress, the final goal of the great efforts of modern civilization, and the innermost wish of every person. (Const. dogm. de Ecclesia, Lumen Gentium, 36.) The development of humanity should serve general well-being, wars and organized mass murder take hold instead. Theological, ethical, social, legal, and psychological points require, in fact, demand peace, and yet we fail to do everything to bring this peace about. The modern human can achieve almost anything, yet peace seems further and further out of reach. It's a tragic fact of today's life that humanity's fate is determined almost entirely by violence, and they come up with various false pretexts to present completely illogical wars, thousands of kilometers away, as self-defense, and deem every deed heroism, when their real name is barbarism. They make

18 *Report.* Budapest, February 22, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 62.

humans into wolves, and in the end, they even decorate them with medals, when it's shame that they should be feeling.

If the political leaders of a country cannot come to the realization that at the present stage of civilization, it isn't wars that make a nation great, but peace, and if the lack of insight is coupled with the lack of humanity, then it's up to us to do everything for peace, then we are God-appointed guardians of morals in this world. Today, a severe, great war cannot be contained to a small area, because its economical, moral impact ripples through the whole of humanity, leaving deep and bitter scars everywhere.

We admit there are big efforts for peace, the constant intervention of international organizations, disarmament conferences, nuclear non-proliferation treaties, arbitration, but unfortunately these are mostly controlled, or most influenced with votes by the ones involved, who shouldn't be negotiating at the table, but sitting in the dock as defendants. Which is why the decrees of these organizations only bind the small and the weak, but the powerful, the real causes of all this trouble, are free to continue their inhumane wars. [...]

Who among us can be said to be innocent? We have all sinned, either by wreaking havoc, or by being silent, or by such little and weak protesting, that its very purpose was for the defendant to not take it seriously, because we're afraid of him, and we lack the moral courage to risk his disapproval of us. The moral responsibility of today's violent ones is even more aggravated by the fact that not long ago, they were the ones who passed judgment on other nations, but since now we're talking about their power goals, a short time was enough to make them forget their ideas of inhumanity and the unusually cruel horrors of war. [...]

Seeing so much immorality, the fear occurs to us that the Lord will call us to account for our silence. So, we have decided [...] to raise our protesting voices on behalf of the whole of humanity and call on every well-meaning person to join us in protest. [...] Our paternal heart is concerned to see that the leaders guilty of wartime cruelty, seeking self-justification, are using the Church for propaganda purposes. Many excellent Catholics and several members of the clergy have been deceived by the oft-repeated statement that one superpower is making huge sacrifices to raise barriers to the conquests of a hostile world view. Nobody should raise barriers against a world view because nobody can; a spiritual, moral, and social

revival is the only effective means of such a fight. This isn't an ideological struggle anyway, this is a new type of world empire, aiming to be built on colonialism, advancing by any means, and it isn't its world view the attacked nation is protecting, but its freedom. [...] The nation that has put its national renown at stake, has attacked with the most modern equipment and a huge army, a people much smaller and ill-equipped than itself. Its failures, more numerous by the day, have thrust it into frightful and inhumane cruelty; this is the mindset of a sore winner. How long can the world's conscience take this inhumane warfare?

[...] If our Mother Church still has a sense of mission to make the peoples into Christians, it cannot be allied with those who still see the greatness and future of their country in conquering other people. God's blessing cannot be on an enterprise connected to so much cruelty.

So we are proclaiming the triumph of peace. We cannot accept that fighting and violence are the way of life for humanity. Peace, as proclaimed by the Gospel, isn't complacency, but activity, progress.

For this reason and so that this appeal of ours doesn't remain as inconsequential as all the previous ones, we call upon the Archbishops and Bishops of the dioceses involved, to withdraw jurisdiction from the chaplains in the war zones, within their own competence, as regulated by the relevant articles of canon law and other provisions, in order to express their protest against the inhumanity of violence. In certain cases where withdrawing jurisdiction is in our direct competence, we hereby withdraw it from those priests. Completely free of mundane interests, following the teachings of the Gospels alone, we distance ourselves from all unjust and inhumane violence.

Con la nostra Apostolica Benedizione,

Dal Vaticano, ... 1970.

Paulus PP. VI."[19]

The above statement against the Vietnam War, a generously quoted *motu proprio*, will not be found among those given by Pope Paul VI, but only in Nagy's writings, since he, not the Holy Father, was its author.[20]

19 *Draft of a counter-encyclical.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/132.

20 *Draft of a counter-encyclical. Text 2.* [Budapest] September 9, 1970. OSZK Kt., f. 216/132.

He had first penned an apostolic brief for the bishops and priests of the US in Paul VI's name, calling for peace, condemning American military activities in Vietnam, and withdrawing jurisdiction from Catholic priests serving in the US army.[21] However, this was not enough, as he went on to forge a general papal document along similar thematic lines. This "counter-encyclical" would comprise part of a disinformation operation Nagy referred to as the "three-day affair."[22] The operation itself would not take three days, as more than six months were needed for its preparation. Instead, according to Nagy's calculations, it would have taken three days after a successful operation for the encyclical's forgery to be discovered and made known on an international level. As he commented, "I wrote a Papal encyclical on the Vietnam war. I wanted to print it and suddenly send it (from Rome) to the big papers. They would have published it believing it was an original. The Pope would have come clean the next day, but millions would have read by then what the Pope should have done with this dirty business of war."[23]

Nagy carefully organized the operation, submitting its plans piecemeal (in the form of sub-tasks) to his handlers:

Obtain samples of paper as used by the Vatican. The Hungarian Academy of Theology subscribes to the journal Acta Sanctae Sedis,[24] which is, let's say, the Vatican's official gazette. These samples can be analyzed to determine what paper is used and where to obtain it, or, if that proves impossible, to buy the most similar paper. PAPER QUANTITY: I'm planning to send it to ca. 100 daily newspapers, divided between the French, English, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch languages. [...] The text of the 'motu proprio' will not be more than three such pages long as this present sheet... The seal of the Papal Secretariat must be prepared, to be obtained

21 *To the Reverend Bishops and Priests of the United States of America. "Rome, 24 June 1970. On the feast of the brave preacher Saint John the Baptist."* ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/1. 208–14. And OSZK Kt., f. 216/133.

22 *"The three-day affair."* [Budapest] 1970. OSZK Kt., f. 216/128., f. 216/129., f. 216/130., f. 216/131. And f. 216/132.

23 *"The three-day affair."* OSZK Kt., f. 216/128.

24 *Acta Sanctae Sedis* (ASS) existed between 1865 and 1908. Pope Pius X replaced it in 1908 with *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) which continues to function as the Holy See's official gazette. Nagy likely meant the AAS.

from an appointment document of a Bishop, or letters to the Ecclesiastical Office. [...] The approximate time the parcel takes to be delivered to editorial offices must be precisely calculated. [...] Targeted daily newspapers must be selected and their actual addresses obtained.[25]

Nagy continued, writing out instructions by hand, including how to procure Vatican stamps.[26] He trusted that his operation would prove to be "the scandal not just of the year, but the decade. Its main draw lies in the fact that half of the world, progressives, especially overtly rebellious priests will find every word of it true, genuine, and necessary. They will say: 'If it didn't come from the Pope, it should have!' [...] Never again will a chance like this arise to subvert on a massive scale those who are already on the verge of disarray."[27]

The proposal's path after its submission cannot be reconstructed from Nagy's state security materials, preventing us from knowing who read, commented, and discussed the plan, apart from Nagy's case officer. We do know that it ultimately received no support, with Nagy's persona instead becoming a far more pressing issue.

3.

By this time, Nagy's relationship to Hungarian state security had already begun to sour, owing to the realization that his publication plans had been exaggerated.[28] As he remarked,

> The fact is that I haven't become a writer, and it looks like I never will. I write such things that cannot be published here, at this time, according to the understanding (grave mistake) of certain people; or I could write things which can't be published under my name, in fact, even these can only go out as small pamphlets, which isn't literature. Whatever we explain it with, the fact is, I've been prevented from being a writer at home. It was extremely difficult to stomach, but I did it for the cause. You don't know what it cost me! 'Cause' here refers to oper-

25 *A plan of the operation.* [Budapest] July 17, 1970. OSZK Kt., f. 216/130.
26 *Draft of the appeal for peace.* [Budapest] July 22, 1970. OSZK Kt., f. 216/129.
27 *Draft of the appeal for peace*.
28 *Letter to the director of Kossuth Kiadó.* Budapest, June 7, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/3. 86.

> ations, like the 'three-day affair', which would have been such a thing, but these were too large-scale for our minuscule possibilities. [...] The Lexicon of World Literature remains as a so-called 'cover job'...[29]

Nagy, however, also had difficulties with his 'cover,' regularly informing his case officer as to how tedious it was and requesting a different job, such as a research position at an institute. It was not without malice or irony that he commented upon this: "My official work is editing the lexicon, which has reached a phase, simply because of the circumstances, that four grades of elementary school education is sufficient (I had to put code numbers on index cards, which required me to distinguish history from zoology). For six months now, we create index cards for foreign language lexicons and supplement the old cards from the Révai [lexicon]. This is work that eighth graders could do ..."[30]

Nagy's complaints sometimes had a different tenor:

> [I] have given up many of the great plans and promises of Buenos, but I'm stopping here. Instead of grandly writing books and monographs, I'm filling out three-word index cards from 8 [in the morning] to half past 4, then putting the many hundreds of cards of the day into alphabetical order, like infernal solitaire... I'm not doing this. It's killing me. And the question arises, whether I'm being slowly executed here. They'd already started. Even prison is a hundred times better than this. I would just laugh at that, there's a great struggle about it, killed in action, a kind of heroic death, if it isn't dealt out for crimes; but these cards: a swamp, a morass of the kind that one slowly gets trampled into.[31]

Despite his incessant complaining, Nagy did not get another job, and continued working at the editorial office for want of a better idea. On occasion, he would discuss his secret service collaboration outside of his cover job, bitterly criticizing the authorities' methods:

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29 *Report.* Budapest, February 22, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 51.

30 *A few of my personal issues. A conversation with József Lukács.* Budapest, July 30, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/3. 57–58.

31 *Report.* Budapest, February 22, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 53.

> And my other job—I'm getting paid, so I have to do it with integrity as well, let's be brutally honest, is nothing else than I've become an informer and a snitch, who writes reports on his best friends. I've been recruited through colossal psychological effort: psychological warfare, a war of nerves, information control, 'revealing' planted articles and doing certain things this way, I might even call it, serum therapy. There is something to it, although it has failed to live up to the great billing. I drifted almost unnoticeably into circumstances that kill a man possessed of self-esteem and integrity. I swear I believe you that this wasn't on purpose and premeditated, that I drifted into it, because there's nothing else to be had on this line. But I drifted through such subtle steps, that, I admit, it leaves the impression that it was planned all along. I don't believe it, because that would be truly hellish...[32]

Handling Nagy proved a serious challenge to the authorities owing to the problems which constantly arose, although his existential conflict attracted attention only for its psychological aspects, i.e. as an 'indoctrination' task to be solved. Nagy's overseers presumably did not consider his state so severe as to warrant interference or more drastic measures. They scrutinized Nagy's potential, his state, and the likelihood that he could, and would again, prove effective for them. In summarizing their collaboration:

> when communicating he regularly requests that he be considered a fighter in the struggle for the victory of the new social order, which, since he knows the enemy, he is able to wage with more than just "an open helmet." In the event that we can convince him that the case given him serves our interests, he is ready to take on even the most complex tasks of state security work without reservation. Due to his intellectual competence, he is especially fond of complex assignments. His Jesuit upbringing equipped him with just the skills and traits for these tasks. There is certainly adventurousness in his character. (He mentioned several times, that he envies the Latin American guerillas, who can fight with a gun in their hand, and if possible, he would hap-

32 *Report.* Budapest, February 22, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 58–59.

> pily volunteer for any armed operation.) Over the course of his handling, it was possible to talk him out of his extreme ideas in ideological matters by employing theoretical arguments. This forms a constant part of indoctrination work concerning the agent.[33]

Presumably due to similar experience, the importance of indoctrination work was broadly prescribed to case officers in a 1972 directive from the Interior Ministry: "Greater attention must be paid to educate and guide network persons, with special regard to increasing their opportunities to gather intelligence."[34]

Over the years, state security officers who had come into contact with Nagy all reached similar conclusions: "Handling him is no easy task due to his exaltedness and perpetual need to be active..."[35] However, since "'Kőműves' is, to this day, mentally and physically completely fit,[36] full of ambition, restless, and a typical Jesuit, who still has a great deal of potential, and more for future development," as they put it, they were reluctant to sever ties. At the time, state security policy stated that "agent handling can only be successful if there is intellectual balance between the case officer and his assets;" however, in Nagy's case, this posed a formidable challenge to the authorities. None of 'Guszti's' successors as Nagy's liaison could form as solid a relationship, perhaps attributable in part to Bárdos' academic background in psychology.[37]

Despite his frustration, there does not ever appear to have been any question of Nagy's trustworthiness: "We have monitored 'Kirchenbauer' regularly over the past six years (network, K-monitoring, surveillance) [...] and have found no sign of sharing of classified infomation or indiscretion in his work."[38] Because of Nagy's commitment to his work, he was given a new status, namely that of a secret agent, reaffirming his collaboration with the authorities on a patriotic basis. His elevation in status was part of the 1972 review and reorganization of agent networks following

33 *Summary report.* Budapest, April 14, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 9.
34 Order 005. Of April 1972. ÁBTL 4.1. A-3118. 115.
35 *Report.* Budapest, August 21, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 41. Et passim
36 Nagy was 66 when this was written.
37 On this issue see Mirák, "Az ideális tartótiszt," 170–94.
38 *Report.* Budapest, April 14, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 10.

new Interior Ministry regulations.[39] Since Nagy's focus at the time was South America, in the spring of l972 he was transferred to Department III/II-1.[40] There, he received a new case officer, police Captain Andor Pál (codename: "András Pusztai"), who met Nagy on a biweekly basis in the "Herceg" ("Prince") K-apartment.[41] The name "András Pusztai," like that of his predecessor Bárdos, is found from then on in Nagy's calendars as the emergency contact.[42]

Even though the South American church angle had not been realized with Nagy's participation, and his proposed disinformation operation against the US enjoyed no support, Nagy remained in state security's favor, owing to his proclivity for risk-taking, great intellectual capacity, and usefulness as a secret commissioner. Accordingly, Nagy continued to report on the various South American embassies, but also took an active part in Hungarian state security operations against the Vatican. Following a chance meeting, he also attempted to penetrate Freemasonry. As such, Nagy could, at the very least, no longer complain of being bored to death, apart from his work at the editorial office.

39 Kónyáné and Petrikné, *Ügynöksorsok*, 224–25. This regulation divided network agents into three categories, depending on the extent of their working relationship with state security, the function of the network, and the basis of cooperation: Secret collaborators, secret commissioners, and agents. Secret collaborators (tmt) were at the top. Secret commissioners, like Nagy, belonged to the middle category. Like tmt's, they collaborated out of principle, that is to say, on a patriotic basis. At the bottom of the network hierarchy were agents. On the issue concerning churches see also: Mirák, "Színe és visszája," 61–205. Proposal to reassign Nagy: ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 54–55.

40 *Summary report.* Budapest, April 14, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 11.

41 *Report.* [no place] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 14.

42 *Calendars, notebooks.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

XI

Disappearing Clues: Töhötöm Nagy and Hungarian Freemasonry

> *"Yes. His house is perfect for that. There's enough room, and nobody would suspect Masonic activity there, where all the party functionaries live.... I will get the paraphernalia from my home. You know, whatever I managed to buy from second-hand salesmen and at the Ecseri [flea market]."*[1]

The modern history of Freemasonry in Hungary is a cycle of prohibition, resumption, and institutionalization.[2] Before the 1950 ban, around 1,300 Freemasons attended Budapest's 16 lodges and the three others around the country, all of which were subordinate to the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary.[3] After 1950, Hungarian Freemasonry was deemed one of the "more important secret and mass organizations of Horthy-fascism," and targeted by the political police as such. To aid police investigation, a textbook was compiled at the Police Academy summarizing the history of Freemasonry as the "Free Masonic Movement" [sic!].[4] This summary observes that both the leadership and membership are of "bourgeois origin," and, to illustrate this, it lists the names and occupations of the Grand Lodge's leadership in 1937:

1 Sárosdi, *Az áruló*, 103.
2 On the history of Freemasonry see L. Nagy, *Szabadkőművesség*, and Berényi, *Budapest és a szabadkőművesség*.
3 Benedek, "Egység a hazában," 85.
4 Police Major József Kellermann. *A Horthy-fasizmus jelentősebb titkos szervezeteinek és tömegszervezeteinek rövid története* [A short history of the most significant secret organs and movements of Horthy fascism]. Budapest, Interior Ministry Police Academy, 1960. ÁBTL 4.1. A-3753. 49–56.

"Grand Master: Kálmán Bakonyi, retired Supreme Justice,
Dep. Grand Masters: József Balassa and Ignác Pfeiffer, retired university professors,
Grand Warden: Jenő Gál, attorney,
Dep. Grand Warden: Jenő Temesvári, chief physician,
Grand Secretary: József Fleischig, bank manager,
Grand Archivist: Ödön Gerő, journalist,
Grand Steward: Lajos Kaunitz, teacher."[5]

The document then proceeds to list the lodges overseen by the Symbolic Grand Lodge: "Democracy, Archimédesz, Budapest, Comenius, Eötvös, Galilei, Mátyás Corvin, Torch, Coloman the Learned, Eagle, World, Ferenc Deák, Progress, Martinovics, Minerva, Neuschloss, and Reform."[6] Police Major József Kellermann, the work's author, did not supply a bibliography at the end of his work, but his data matches that of József Palatinus' *A szabadkőművesség bűnei* (The sins of Freemasonry).[7]

In line with the vulgar Marxist view of history, drawing conclusions from "The Sins of Freemasonry," Kellermann confidently guided his readers, prospective specialists at the interior ministry who were preparing for counterintelligence work, to further operative state security work.[8] Regarding the program of Freemasonry, he noted that while in "implementing it, they aimed to weaken feudal power in Hungary," which could have been positive, "they imagined the resolution of program points strictly on 'bourgeois grounds'."[9] And because "its activists and most of its membership came from a bourgeois and capitalist background, their goal was bourgeois democracy, to secure their own political, economic power." Finally, Kellermann reaches his main conclusion: "[t]hey stand for the realization of bourgeois democracy, and as such, supported bourgeois

5 Kellermann. *A Horthy-fasizmus,* 52.
6 Kellermann. *A Horthy-fasizmus,* 51.
7 Palatinus, *A szabadkőművesség*, 46, 49. This also provides an excellent example of how Hungarian state security instrumentalized data from the interwar period for its own purposes.
8 "[M]embers of these organizations must be kept under close operative control and continuous study using operative means and measures at our disposal." ÁBTL 4.1. A-3753. 102.
9 Ibid. 53.

parties and movements after the end of World War II, and they stand in opposition to the working class and people's democracy."[10] This interpretation not only justified the 1950 ban, but also its continued legitimacy.

Freemasonry appears alongside groups such as the Etelköz Federation, the Association of Arising Hungarians, the Double-Cross Blood Federation, the Hungarian National Defense Force Association, and the Hungarian Community. At the same time, it is ascribed less importance than they are:

"Concerning their operative evaluation, it must be noted that they currently do not represent a significant hostile base. Most of their membership has died, grown too old, and emigrated to the West. The organization has lost its economic base since its bourgeois members have lost their fortunes. Freemasonry didn't emerge during the counter-revolution [in 1956]. Its significance rests chiefly in some former members having had, and still possessing a wide, international network of contacts."[11] In line with this, even in the darkest moment of the 1950s, no legal proceedings were opened against any Freemason in Hungary.[12]

Nagy's Masonic past had, up to this point, been treated as an aside in his state security work. However, after taking up part-time employment at the Argentine Embassy in 1972, he discovered a Freemason of Hungarian origin he knew from Buenos Aires, Federico "Freddy" Fried, who was on a diplomatic mission to Budapest. Nagy summarized what he knew about Fried for state security in 1977:

> Federico Fried is a ca. 60-year-old, married, childless Argentine diplomat of Hungarian origin. [...] I met him among the Freemasons, where he was an old member, and was at a higher degree. We became friends, as he is an expressly humanist type: wishing to do good to everyone, he believes in people, and is maybe even a little naïve. He is very well-read, but the whole man is somehow smalltime, as often happens with good people. [...] He was finally appointed administrator at the Embassy in

10 Ibid. 55–56.
11 Ibid. 56.
12 Benedek, "Egy hírhedett kalandor."

> Bonn [...] He did a very good job in Bonn [...] of course he remained an active Freemason, and even founded a lodge exclusively for diplomats.[13]

Through Fried, Nagy's Masonic ties were renewed, and he was subsequently ordered to monitor and influence Freemasonry.[14]

Prometheus Lodge in Bonn, which Nagy mentions in his report, was not originally founded for diplomats; however, since Bonn was the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany, those working at foreign embassies, as well as West German governmental employees, were more prevalent among its membership than elsewhere. After coming into contact with Stephanus Pfürtner in 1963, the lodge focused on analyzing the relationship between Christianity and Freemasonry, He was a Dominican moral theologian of the Sankt Albert abbey in Walberberg near Bonn, and a committed proponent of Vatican II, with whom the lodge began a lively dialogue on settling the relationship between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry.[15] As such, the lodge had a history of, and even disposition for, discussing church issues. Nagy was probably known to them through his book, so Fried "had no difficulty arranging for me to be invited back in 1972..."[16]

During his journey to Germany, Nagy stopped in Frankfurt, giving a lecture related to a leadership election at the *Quatuor Coronati* lodge.[17] From there, he traveled on to Paris, and finally to Bonn. Nagy travelled between March 17 and 26, 1972.

For Hungarian state security, Nagy's connection to Western Freemasonry was not only a source of new encounters and contacts, but also an opportunity for painting a positive picture of Kádár's Hungary and the Hungarian Catholic Church's situation, thereby enhancing the regime's reputation. These were likely the most important points to be stressed at the Prometheus lodge.[18]

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13 *Report.* Budapest, March 29, 1977. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 119.

14 "The recommendation of someone like Fried was enough for them to welcome me without any further ado." *My first journey to Germany.* Frankfurt–Paris–Bonn. March 17–26, 1972. OSZK Kt. f. 216/22. 5. and the same: ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 213.

15 *Geschichte der Prometheus Loge [History of the Prometheus Lodge].* http://www.p.bonn.freimaurerei.de (Last retrieved: 07.02.2022.)

16 *Report.* Budapest, 29 March 1977. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 119.

17 *My first journey to Germany.* Frankfurt–Paris–Bonn. March 17–26, 1972. OSZK Kt., f. 216/22. 6.

18 *My first journey to Germany,* 5.

With these goals in mind, Nagy prepared his presentation, entitled *The Church Drifting into Crisis.*[19] He must have sensed some sort of danger, however, as he mentioned several difficulties in his report. Reconnecting with Freemasonry was difficult, owing to his abrupt break with the Kossuth lodge, and the fact that—as he had learned from European Masons—this occurrence was known in Europe: The Hungarian Freemasons in Argentina had also discussed Nagy with their European counterparts.

Nagy's fears were counter-balanced by his book's popularity, which he hoped played an even more significant role in how he was perceived by Freemasons. His writing was internationally known and respected in Masonic circles, two factors he could count on when establishing new contacts. Still, he had to exercise caution in the face of both gossip concerning his person and the possibility of Argentinian Masonic revenge, both of which were merely confirmed by another meeting in Budapest.

After Fried, Nagy was visited by several émigré Masons, among them Mihály Kemény, Worshipful Master of Martinovics Lodge, who helped organize Nagy's trip to Paris. During Kemény's visit to Budapest, they discussed Nagy's upcoming journey to Western Europe as well as his repatriation. Kemény professed to be a sincere supporter of Nagy's, and Nagy also mentioned their friendly correspondence from earlier.[20] In a state security network report, Nagy described their ensuing conversation in detail; highlighting a remark Kemény meant to be light-hearted, however, had the opposite effect upon him. He allegedly remarked: "You couldn't get rid of us if you wanted to!" to which Nagy wittily replied "Good thing I don't want to, then." However, in the report written a few days after the meeting, Nagy analyzed the sentence, which according to him concealed a threat, at length.[21] In fact, Nagy was so worried something might

19 *The Church drifting into crisis.* Frankfurt, 18 March 1972 and Bonn, 24 March 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 186–224. In Töhötöm Nagy's bequest: OSZK Kt., f. 216/136., in German: OSZK Kt., f. 216/137. A draft was submitted to state security on February 17, 1971 under the title *Internal turmoil and external difficulties in the current life of the Catholic Church – a draft.* ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 56–59. He showed the presentation's text to Grand Master dr György Takács, who liked it and found it good that Nagy had been invited to speak by the Germans. *Network report.* Budapest, March 10, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 203–204.

20 *Töhötöm Nagy's letters to Mihály Kemény.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/235.

21 *Network report.* Budapest, April 2, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 94.

happen, that, before he left, he asked Takáts to "take care of his wife and daughter should an unexpected disaster befall him."[22]

It is not known what Nagy thought might happen; however, he was plagued by uncharacteristic unrest and anxiety throughout his journey to Germany. First, he blamed it on his worsening knowledge of German: "A hitherto unknown fear struck me on the plane, not because of the text, but the German language, as I've forgotten so much, I felt I lost the ground under my feet. [...] I kept thinking the only solution would be for my plane to crash, I was even slightly hoping for it."[23]

The presumed lack of linguistic competence and his dramatic solution for escaping the situation were both somewhat irrational. He later elaborated upon his fear by stating that he felt pressure at the Frankfurt talk owing to the content of his presentation:

"The reading started easily enough, and I had gotten through more than half of it, to the point where Marxism was named as the fourth threat to the Church, which took away the faithful, rather than faith itself. This was when I started to feel that a strong aversion to me was growing. It should be noted that I have a keen telepathic instinct, and I am extremely sensitive to moods. I felt the crowd had turned so strongly, that I broke into a cold sweat."[24]

From the above, we can conclude that it was the talk's content, and the message Nagy had conveyed, that triggered his uncharacteristic anxiety. Old gossip and the rustiness of his German were only secondary factors. As it turned out, in Frankfurt at least, Nagy's fears were well-grounded.

Following a brief introduction, he discussed the critical state of the Church, which he saw as so severe that he asked: "can it be saved using the means available? [...] It depends on its enemies, who have been excommunicated several times, on the 'modus vivendi' with them, to determine what its fate shall be in a reordered world."[25] At that time, *modus vivendi* meant the way the Church could exist and survive in socialist countries.

22 Takáts, "Futok a kitűzött cél felé..."
23 *My first journey to Germany.* Frankfurt–Paris–Bonn. March 17–26, 1972. OSZK Kt., f. 216/22. 2.
24 *My first journey to Germany,* 7.
25 *The Church drifting into crisis.* Frankfurt, March 18, 1972 and Bonn, March 24, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 186.

In his presentation, Nagy specified the origins of threats to the Church dating back to the Renaissance, followed by Protestantism, and then Freemasonry, which promoted the scientific worldview undermining the Church's power as an apostle of free thought. The fourth threat, according to Nagy, emanated from Marxism, which diverted the masses away from the Church. At that moment, sensing the hostile atmosphere, Nagy went on to discuss the relationship between the Church and social systems.

Not even Nagy's introductory thought was accepted by many of the German Freemasons in attendance: "[I] consider the opposition of the two camps [Church and Communism – É.P.] a necessary stage in historical evolution in the sense of Hegelian philosophy; I would also like to point out that, for me, it is beyond doubt, also based on Hegelian philosophy, that neither party emerges out of this struggle as victor, since both of them will have to give up much of their own, and borrow from the other..."[26] Then "I went on to talk about the hardest subject, the theology of violence, and I got to a point where the Church would [one day] bless the guns of the rioters in the Negro getho [sic!] and those of striking workers."[27] Before he could be accused of being a Communist apologist, Nagy stated: "[I] solemnly declare that I am not a Communist, I am a humanist infused with Masonic principles: I aim to understand and weigh everyone from their own point of view. I've been watching Communism from the inside for four years now, and I see the accusations and convictions not as a member of the loudly shouting choir, but standing among those against whom they are made."[28]

The first audience member to speak after Nagy's presentation deemed what he had just heard as "vulgar Communist propaganda."[29] However, Nagy was up to the challenge, and, despite receiving harsh criticism from several in attendance, defended his position with coherent arguments. Eventually, Grand Master Zonnanini voiced his objection to the printing of Nagy's presentation. In the report he later wrote about his journey, he described the debate in the following manner: "[s]umming up the

26 *The Church drifting into crisis,* 211.
27 *My first journey to Germany,* 8–9.
28 *The Church drifting into crisis,* 217.
29 *My first journey to Germany,* 2.

addresses, there were more of those who spoke against me."[30] But, after the presentation, there were many who gathered around him, waving his book and looking for an autograph, asking to take him out to dinner, so that, in the end, the positives balanced out the mixed discussions his talk had generated.

This, however, would not be the last controversy generated by Nagy's trip. From Frankfurt, he continued on to Paris and met the Hungarian Freemasons of Paris, members of the Martinovics Lodge: Worshipful Master Kemény, Károly Kecskeméti, Ákos Ditrói, and Mátyás Kabók.[31] The Argentine Hungarian Freemasons came up during a conversation with Kemény, when Nagy explained his departure from the Kossuth Lodge, which had been uncomfortable for him as it vindicated his fears. This meeting also ended in a debate as to the current state of Hungary, which Nagy, according to his report, concluded with these words: "[y]ou have to talk this way because how else would you justify rotting here in Paris; I also have to talk the way I do because how else would I justify *defecting home.*"[32]

All told, Nagy was unable to dispel the suspicions that surrounded him. However, this meeting was not without its benefits. Nagy learned that the Martinovics Lodge, founded by members of the Hungarian Masonic emigration, played a very important role in the continuity of Freemasonry. Since Freemasonry was banned in Hungary, those interested in joining a Hungarian language lodge were admitted to Martinovics Lodge when they went to Paris.[33] In Paris, Nagy could sense how the ban on Freemasonry threatened the institution in Hungary, owing to the break in tradition. Perhaps at this point, Nagy might have contemplated another way of bridging the issue, which he did not mention either to the Parisians or state security: Illegally initiating apprentices in Budapest.

From Paris Nagy travelled to Bonn, where he ascertained that the local lodge included many members of the intelligentsia, such as civil servants and ministry officials. In accordance with the plans of state security, these

30 *My first journey to Germany,* 11.
31 *My first journey to Germany,* 20.
32 *My first journey to Germany,* 21. (Emphasis in the original.)
33 The Austrian Gleichheit [Equality] Lodge also played an important role in continuity which—although its language was German—would admit Hungarian members.

were precisely the people his presentation aimed to target.[34] He was told that the Americans stationed in West Germany had their own lodges and that "every other American is a Mason."[35] His host was the Prometheus Lodge No. 268, led at the time by Joachim Rapp. Nagy also read *The Church Drifting into Crisis* there as well, an event that was received very positively, and did not devolve into a debate, as it had in Frankfurt. Eventually Rapp even made an offer to Nagy that, if he could arrange a dismissal from the Argentine lodge, Prometheus Lodge would accept him as a member.[36] Nagy saw this as a significant result, and directly addressed the state security officials reading his report: "You always suppose the worst of everyone, but so consistently, that you are absolutely certain to be wrong in many cases, and make informers of weaker character or more timid ones talk about 'the horrors'."[37] He, on the other hand, "had to" report on positive events and meetings.

Another benefit of the journey was that Nagy could establish long-term contacts by way of his admission to the lodge in Bonn. "Tell the superficial circumstances," he wrote, in musing about the possibilities, "and hide the inner essence, it's a piece of cake to fake an essence."[38] Protecting himself, he described his experiences to an old fellow Mason: "We Freemasons, are, of course, champions of real intellectual freedom. Still, it was enough just to hear unfounded accusations. You know how baseless it was to assert that I became a Communist… […] So nobody misunderstands me, here's another summary of the principles I'm protecting, and my statements: freedom is relative in and of itself; we can only talk about a shift of proportions; and finally, the evolution of humanity, for its very survival, is headed towards collectivism."[39]

It was common state security practice for an agent to be controlled and watched by another agent. For Nagy, this was Takáts or "Barát," who, as we have seen previously, reported on his tour of Western Masonic circles. In his report dated May 2, 1972, he wrote that he met Nagy on April

34 *My first journey to Germany,* 23.
35 *My first journey to Germany*, 23.
36 *My first journey to Germany*, 24.
37 *My first journey to Germany,* 25.
38 *My first journey to Germany,* 29.
39 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Dezső Patzauer.* Budapest, October 6, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 170.

Töhötöm Nagy in 1976

25, 1972 and discussed his journey West. "Barát's" report was consistent with the one Nagy submitted to the authorities. He notes how Nagy spoke in front of 300–350 people in Frankfurt, and, even though the debate following his presentation had been lively, that he was invited to hold a talk the following year entitled *Humanism in Socialism.*[40] In and of itself, the state security report does not prove that Nagy was actually invited, and we are unable to determine from written sources whether he again returned to Western Europe on lodge business. Still, "Barát" reports that Nagy came back to Hungary "with deep impressions and decided to rekindle his Masonic contacts."[41]

It is definitively known that Nagy interacted with Freemasons in Budapest and joined their secret meetings; however, we cannot date these to a specific point in time. Szabolcs Benedek, in *Egy hírhedett kalandor a 20. századból (A Nagy Töhötöm-féle inasavatásokról)* [An infamous adventurer from the 20th century (on Töhötöm Nagy's apprentice initiations)] mentions that these started after the death of Marcell Benedek (1969), when Dr György Takács was Worshipful Master.[42] A state security source confirms that Nagy was in contact with Takács as early as 1971.[43] Oral recollections, on

40 *Information note.* Tatabánya, May 2, 1972. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-41644. 209–210.
41 *Information note,* 210.
42 Benedek, "Egy hírhedett kalandor."
43 ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 203–204.

the other hand, date Nagy's appearance to the mid-1970s.[44] As such, while it is unknown when Nagy joined the "Masonic diaspora" led by Miklós Auer[45] in Budapest, there is no doubt that he did.[46]

Auer, a numismatist of national renown, collected Masonic paraphernalia from second-hand salesmen as well as estates. His apartment was one of the venues where former Masons met. Eventually these meetings shifted to Nagy's apartment on Pusztaszeri út. The report states that "it was mostly Miklós Auer with the hammer [...] this [the meetings] consisted mainly of conducting presentations on a wide variety of topics (strictly non-political, mind you) and subsequent Q&A sessions." Despite the ban, Auer believed that Freemasons should not completely isolate themselves from the world, "but monitor the youth with open eyes, and find those among them who would somehow continue Freemasonry."[47] Nagy was convinced of the importance of this by his trip to Western Europe, so he offered to hold secret apprentice initiations at his apartment in order for young candidates to be "almost 'appointed' Masons in the twilight by candlelight, having waited outside in a place that was nearly a darkroom."[48] Initiates were not given an apron, but could use objects from Auer's collection during the initiation ceremony.

Nagy's turn to become host of secret Masonic meetings and initiation ceremonies in the Pusztaszeri út apartment he had received from Hungarian state security again lent his life a romantic and ironic touch. More broadly, it also reveals the secret life of 1970s Budapest.[49] According to the extant sources, Nagy conveniently "forgot" to report these events to his case officer.

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44 Two of the Freemasons initiated by Nagy agreed to speak with me. I hereby thank them for making themselves available and helping me to better understand the events as well as Töhötöm Nagy. They requested that their identities remain anonymous.

45 Miklós Auer (1903–1979) was a numismatist and became a Mason in Vienna in 1935. He was made Worshipful Master of the Lodge of the Faithful of Old in Budapest in 1946.

46 Dobsa, "Jezsuita és szabadkőműves," 9–13.

47 Benedek, "Egy hírhedett kalandor," 83.

48 Benedek, "Egy hírhedett kalandor," 84.

49 It even inspired a retro murder mystery. Nagy appears several times in Bence Sárosdi's book as Ignác Méliusz, a character who embodies many of the aspects of secret or underground life in Kádár-era Budapest. Sárosdi, *Az áruló*.

XII

"The Last Port of Call"

> *"I would like to reassure everyone that my loyalty is unwavering, I wish to continue working to benefit the regime. This is the last port of call for me. I do find it hard to convince myself that I have not, in essence, been done away with, since there's much work I can still do for the regime. The truth is, some things just have to be buried."*[1]

1.

In the final years of Nagy's life, alongside his renewed work among Freemasons, network activities against South American embassies remained important. He performed a number of odd jobs for the embassies, such as compiling Hungarian press reviews according to specific criteria,2 translating, and interpreting. These provided him with an opportunity for forming personal relationships with ambassadors, embassy secretaries, various attachés, and other staff members. Nagy and his family deftly cultivated these ties through dinner invitations and participation in joint programs, to such an extent that, by the 1970s, the Nagy family had become pillars of the South American colony in Budapest and were accepted by the Spanish speaking community, many members of which could, and did, rely on them, owing to their cultural, political, and local knowledge.3 Nagy's wife

1 *Pro memoria.* Budapest, August 31, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/8. 25.

2 *Iglesia y estado en Hungria [Church and State in Hungary].* Budapest, 6 de marzo 1973. OSZK Kt., f. 216/93. 1. fol. and *Report to a South American embassy.* [no place] ca. 1974. OSZK Kt., f. 216/93.

3 Nagy received an entertainment allowance from the authorities from July 1st 1972. *Proposal.* Budapest, May 14, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 54–55.

was employed at the Argentine Embassy,4 his daughter at the Peruvian representation, and he himself was welcome, in addition to the above, at the Colombian, Bolivian, and Venezuelan diplomatic missions. At social events, he made Chilean, Uruguayan, and tangentially Spanish contacts, regularly reporting on them to state security authorities, as well as to new acquaintances. The press reviews he compiled, and the informational material requested by the embassies, were also reported, so that the attention of his South American friends could be carefully directed to events that showcased the achievements of Socialist Hungary.5

Nagy enjoyed a special bond with Venezuelan Ambassador Gonzáles: During a handshake, they let one another know that they were both Freemasons. As a Masonic brother, he won Gonzáles' trust to such a degree that the Ambassador offered him the position of cultural secretary, which Nagy accepted after receiving approval from Hungarian authorities, and which he was able to operatively exploit.[6] He became close, even intimate, friends with Juan Álvarez Vita,[7] secretary of the Peruvian Embassy, and Raúl María Pereira, the Peruvian Ambassador.

> During the conversation, I suddenly hear Spanish among a large group; I apologize to the people I am with and leave them to join the Spaniards. What a company it was! We became very good friends. The Peruvian and Venezuelan Embassies were there, a secretary from the Brazilians, and one young Spanish commissioner. [...] I warmed up to them—it's easy with Latinos, especially if you know them, and if you've lived with

4 Trust in Nagy grew after Fr Castex's trip to Hungary in 1970. On this see chapter *"In action again: the 'three-day affair' and the 'infernal solitaire'"* The Argentine chargé d'affaires, Fernández, offered to employ Nagy's daughter at the embassy, but Hungarian authorities, guided by Department III/II-1, thought it better to employ Nagy's wife. In the end, it was Paulina Pölöskey who worked at the Argentine Embassy. *Summary report.* Budapest, April 14, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 9.

5 E.g. for the Peruvian Embassy. *Network report.* Budapest, November 9, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 189–190. Andor Pál, his case officer, was so satisfied with his work that Nagy received an 800-forint reward on his birthday in 1972. *Proposal.* Budapest, June 22, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 28.

6 Ibid.

7 He met Juan Álvarez Vita at a reception at the Argentine Embassy, and they became family friends. *„25 de Mayo," Argentine national holiday.* Budapest, May 26, 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 114–115. His characterization: *Juan Álvarez Vita, secretary at the Peruvian Embassy.* Budapest, August 3, 1972. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 53–58.

them and have something good to say. I think I understand their language, also in the figurative sense.[8]

Nagy's new friends also helped his daughter Krisztina secure secretarial work at the Peruvian Embassy. Hungarian state security planned to use her as a so-called social contact under the codename "Carmen," in order to assess her potential for intelligence work.[9] First, Lt. Ferenc Kázsmér[10] spoke with her on several occasions, when, in addition to her career ambitions, he also discovered how she felt about her family's life in Hungary.[11] Although she moved to Rome in 1973 with the authorities' "approval," as her father put it, "to work there and find a host of illusions,"[12] her stay proved beneficial for Hungarian state security, as it provided justification for Nagy's own trips to the Italian capital. The authorities created a 'legend' for Krisztina's relocation which facilitated Nagy's journeys, and it also was suggested that she should receive financial support.[13]

Thus, Töhötöm and his wife travelled to Rome in September 1973 under the pretense of visiting their daughter.[14] In reality, Nagy was on a state security mission whose target was Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe.[15] He brought him a twelve-page report on the Hungarian situation, which had been carefully prepared by state security.[16] It primarily dealt with the evolution of Socialism, situating the relationship between Church and

8 Ibid.

9 "Social contact" did not entail network (agent) work or informing like the East German "informal collaborator," but rather, providing information on a loose, ad hoc basis without obligation. Although Krisztina was not recruited, she was kept under surveillance. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 39–40.

10 Ferenc Kázsmér (1942–), then First Lt., worked at Department III/II-2 between 1970 and 1977. See: https://www.abtl.hu/ords/archontologia/f?p=108:13:::NO:13:P13_OBJECT_ID,P13_OBJECT_TYPE:1105396,ELETRAJZ (Last retrieved: 04.06.2022.)

11 *Memorandum.* Budapest, November 20, 1972. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 39–40.

12 *Report.* Budapest, November 12, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 83.

13 This was not provided as Krisztina abruptly moved back to Budapest. *Report.* Budapest, November 23, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 81–82.

14 *Memorandum.* Budapest, August 30, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 59–60. The authorities instructed Nagy to talk his daughter into staying in Rome, however, he was unsuccessful. *Report.* Budapest, 12 November 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 83–87.

15 *Report.* Budapest, October 7, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 140–146.

16 *Reports so far submitted to the Vatican Secretariat of State.* Budapest, May 17, 1976. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 205. On the negotiations: *Report.* Budapest, September 12, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 79–80. Draft and text of the report: *Report.* Budapest, September 8, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 88–100.

state within a historical framework. Nagy summarized the general trend to the Jesuit Superior General in the following words:

> We must draw practical conclusions from this broad overview. Today we can't look at Communism or Socialism the same way as in the early years, because it isn't what it used to be: it has evolved, become more humane, a serene negotiating partner, with more stages of development to follow, which could be facilitated by our collaboration. The main driving force behind its development is living history itself.[17]

Through discussions with several people at the Jesuit Curia, Nagy learned about the preparations for the XXXII General Congregation, planned for the following year. Many of them encouraged Nagy, as a Jesuit of four vows and despite his laicity, to exercise his right and submit a memorandum to the General Congregation. Nagy informed Hungarian state security that this was an opportunity he would very much like to exploit.[18]

Nagy's stay in Rome had another far-reaching consequence. He was able to submit his report, not only to the Curia, but, through his South American contacts, to the Vatican Secretariat of State. Carlos Hernández Bernal, the Colombian *chargé d'affaires* was one of Nagy's diplomatic friends in Hungary, and had already accepted his help several times (making sure, of course, that such help was positive). Upon learning of Nagy's itinerary, Hernández provided him with the contact details of a certain Enrique Arrieta Lara, to whom he should turn in Rome, which Nagy did. In accordance with the approach worked out in conjunction with state security authorities, Nagy told Arrieta that, in addition to visiting his daughter, he was going to go to the Jesuit Generalate to greet an old acquaintance and provide him with a report. At the end of their informal discussion, he suggested handing over the report intended for the Jesuit Superior General to him as well. According to Nagy's later comments, Arrieta "was more than pleased with the offer, and said that it was not an indiscretion, since

17 *Report.* Budapest, September 8, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 100. and Department III/III-1 also received Nagy's report: *Report.* Budapest, October 17, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 102–119. k.

18 *Report.* Budapest, October 17, 1973. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 108.

Fr General was bound to show it to others, so one more wouldn't matter, and he wouldn't discuss it with anyone else…"[19]

In this fashion, Nagy achieved his goal, leaving a copy of the report with Arrieta and returning the following day to discuss it, as had been agreed upon. Arrieta proved an enthusiastic supporter of Nagy's: He was so excited by the report that he arranged for Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, a compatriot, to receive Nagy at the Vatican Secretariat of State.[20] Montalvo welcomed Nagy, and, having asked him about his report, suggested that he could make similar contributions supporting the work of Archbishop Luigi Poggi, who had just begun collaborating with Cardinal Casaroli at the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.[21] To begin, Montalvo offered to serve as intermediary between Nagy and Archbishop Poggi, but also promised to personally introduce them on Nagy's next trip to Rome.[22] Nagy's report on the Vatican's information, however, actually strengthened the Hungarian negotiating party's hand in the forthcoming official Hungarian–Vatican negotiations. On November 13, 1973, when the president of the State Office for Church Affairs, Imre Miklós, was officially introduced to Poggi, he was certainly well-informed about his negotiating partner.[23]

Having returned home, Nagy contemplated how he should write to Montalvo and Poggi. Takáts, who had again monitored him, informed the authorities that

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19 *Report.* Budapest, October 2, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 156.

20 Gabriel Montalvo (1930–2006) was a Colombian Archbishop and Vatican diplomat, who represented the Holy See in several Central American and North African countries. In Rome, between 1964 and 1974, he oversaw Eastern European affairs at the Vatican Secretariat of State.

21 *Report.* Budapest, October 2, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 159. Luigi Poggi (1917–2010), then Archbishop, was Peruvian nuncio until 1973. Poggi was appointed to the Vatican Secretariat of State around the time of Nagy's negotiation with Archbishop Montalvo, where he succeeded Giovanni Cheli, who was appointed Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. Cheli's removal may have been motivated by his alleged involvement with Eastern European intelligence services. On this see Bottoni, "Egy különleges kapcsolat," 276–77.

22 *Report.* Budapest, October 2, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 160. Nagy was not the only one to report on Montalvo, who was a popular intelligence target. The *Világosság* residency also gathered information on him. See Szabó, "A 'Világosság' fedőnevű," 219, and Bottoni, "Egy különleges kapcsolat," 269–70.

23 *Reminder of the official meeting with Vatican representatives.* Rome, November 13–17, 1973. MNL OL XIX-A-21-e-XXIV. f. 0022-11/e/1973 (31. d.) 3–4.

> Dr Nagy gave a lot of thought to the promise he made to Msg Montalvo regarding information on Hungary, he has not yet decided whether he will write it. He has written a 4–5-page draft, the essence of which is that the Church is unable to formulate a unified position now—due to its constraints, the given situation, existing beliefs. [...] It cannot present a social program, as Socialist governments have claimed that completely for themselves, and, in part, have already realized whatever there is to fight for in the Third World. The Socialist government wants the Church to integrate and serve it, as it did every government since Constantine the Great. And the Church just cannot do this, even though it enjoys some freedom in Socialist states, such as Hungary, where there is no persecution anymore, but only constraints: the prohibition on working with young people, and press restrictions. These facts make it possible for an outsider to still speak of a kind of 'persecution,' and even more so, to put the conscience of the Hungarian clergy at ease for the complacency which can be experienced in almost every diocese in the country.[24]

From the vantage point of Hungarian state security, however, the opportunity that Nagy's relationship with Archbishop Poggi presented was so significant that they decided to put Nagy on the "infiltration channel" to the Vatican that was then emerging.[25] The question was not whether he should write to the Secretariat of State, but rather, what he should say and how.[26] One thing was certain though: He could not add his own ideas or views.

Captain Andor Pál noted, in connection with a suggestion he had made to his case officer, that Nagy "wants to remain 'good' to both sides in his report, he's looking for the middle ground," so he deemed it necessary to

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24 *Information.* [Tatabánya] December 11, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-41644. 298–300. They found Nagy's analysis so important that certain parts were included in the files on "Black house" which focused on the Jesuit center in Rome. *Abstract of Secret Commissioner "Barát's" report on 11 December 1973.* Tatabánya, January 31, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-254/3. 80–81. But "Barát" submitted his detailed report on Nagy's trip to 1st Lt. Péter Ács shortly after Nagy had arrived. *Report.* [Tatabánya] October 30, 1973. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-41644. 288–96.

25 Hungarian intelligence desired to infiltrate as many agents as possible into Archbishop Poggi's entourage. Nagy was not the only one used in connection with Poggi, on this see e.g. Bottoni, "Egy különleges kapcsolat."

26 *Information.* Budapest, 11 January 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 126.

make it clear to him that "the luxury cruise he's travelling on has sprung a leak, and is slowly, but steadily sinking."[27]

Nagy's usefulness was re-examined, and a long planning process began, which included a close look at his marriage, deliberation over his possible return to the Jesuit Order, and his potential deployment as a state security operative in Rome. The analysis—although it references a discussion with Nagy, suggesting that he might have interjected certain information and phrases into the phrasing of the police officer assessing him—provides a dramatic snapshot of Nagy's situation, as well as of the mindset of Hungarian state security.

"A few very important circumstances must be underlined here," it reads,

- "'Kőműves' did not leave his order without a permit.
- 'Kőműves' is a Jesuit of four vows, who can return to the order at any time; according to monastic law, they would have to take him back.
- His marriage is a civil union only, he didn't break the ecclesiastical law, his situation can be resolved through confession and penitence [...]
- 'Kőműves'' wife has taken ill. His daughter, who, from our point of view, is on a good path, has completely escaped the family's control, she's living her own life, her parents have practically lost her.
- Only decency keeps 'Kőműves' by his wife's side, he now considers her a sizable burden, which prevents him from exercising his perpetual impulses of action, even for us, on a much wider scale than at present. He is hoping for his wife's death to be free again, because the role of decent husband and family man, which is a trait so different from his personality, is so alien to him, that neither his age, nor the time he spent married have developed his adaptation skills to an adequate level. [...]
- Returning to the Order is completely obvious for the situation described above and legal formalities. [...]
- ... his return—'regaining the grace of faith' for which every Jesuit prays daily—would obviously be very welcome. This would automatically create an intelligence opportunity.[28]

27 *Report.* Budapest, 27 May 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 146.
28 *Report.* Budapest, August 21, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 37–41.

Even though this plan was deemed "far-fetched," since "his wife could live for years,"[29] an attempt was made to exploit Nagy's new possibilities under the conditions. For that reason, his usage in South American efforts was subordinated to his new Vatican-related duties, and he was seconded to Section III/I-4, while still continuing his South American work. In Section III/I-4, partly responsible for the Vatican, 1st Lieutenant János Knopp became his case officer.[30] From then on, he submitted his reports in the *Ék* (Wedge) K-apartment as well as public places.[31]

2.

In 1974, Cardinal Mindszenty again came into state security's focus. The "resolution" of Mindszenty's situation left several questions unanswered. The Cardinal left the US Embassy in Budapest for Rome in September 1971, settling at the Pázmáneum in Vienna. He remained active, paying visits to Hungarian expatriate communities all over the world,[32] and in 1974, his *Memoirs* were forthcoming.[33] As such, he was visible, not only to the faithful and the Hungarian Church, but to the Hungarian People's Republic and its state security authorities.[34] A new situation arose when on February 5, 1974 Pope Paul VI declared the Archbishopric of Esztergom vacant. From then on, the Hungarian Catholic Church was governed by an apostolic administrator, László Lékai.[35]

The Mindszenty issue also provided another area in which Nagy offered his opinion, knowledge, and even an operation. Nagy suggested writing

29 Ibid., 40.

30 *Certification.* Budapest, December 19, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 225–227.

31 *Report.* Budapest, May 17, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-2316/1. 220–222. K-apartment *Ék* [Wedge] was at 14 Bem József utca, second floor, apt. 1. There, case officers would meet the most elite ecclesiastical agents, among whom was Nagy. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-2316/1. 52.

32 Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 1274–1323.

33 Balogh, "Ikonná dermedt emlékirat," 38–39.

34 Of course, Mindszenty remained a state security target until his death in 1975. Vörös, "Mindszenty megfigyelése," 397–408.

35 At that time, Lékai was apostolic administrator in Veszprém. During Hungarian-Vatican negotiations, the idea was discussed that he should fill the post of apostolic administrator of Esztergom, with an agreement to that effect reached at the meeting in Rome from 13–17 November 1973, as Imre Miklós described in his report. *Report on the negotiations with Vatican commissioners.* Budapest, November 21, 1973. MNL OL XIX-A-21-e-XXIV. f. 0022-11/d/1973 (31. d.) 2.

a summary on Mindszenty for the Vatican, noting how this might help him build rapport with Luigi Poggi:

> [t]he authorities would finally make serious use of having called and helped me home. I believe they found the most authentic witness of the Mindszenty case when they called me home. They even made me write sort of a book on Mindszenty,[36] but because I was unable to remove KALOT and other details, I still have not gotten my manuscript back, to this day, which I would very urgently like to have now. But here's the chance to discuss the Mindszenty case in and of itself, and not write about KALOT, which people here are still afraid of.[37]

This time, the authorities accepted Nagy's proposal, although they did not react to his remarks about the manuscript. Thus, the eleven-page *The State of and Possibilities for the Church in Hungary. Reflections on the Publication of Mindszenty's Memoirs* was born.[38] In this, Nagy described some details of his relationship with Mindszenty, and, on the occasion of the publication of Mindszenty's memoirs, cataloged the numerous "errors" it propagated. Nagy continued by describing the situation in Hungary, which he characterized with all the trimmings of peaceful and established Socialism: a sober ideological struggle, economic growth, and social consolidation. Interpreting the state of the Church, he emphasized the importance of collaboration and compromise:

> If the Church has any potential today in Hungary, and everyone knows that the scope is wider than at any time in the last 25 years, it's to the

36 Töhötöm Nagy. *Korfordulón.*

37 *Report*. Budapest, April 20, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/5. 136.

38 *Az egyház helyzete és lehetőségei Magyarországon: reflexiók Mindszenty bíboros Emlékiratai megjelenése alkalmából* [The situation and possibilities of the Church in Hungary: Reflection on occasion of the publication of Cardinal Mindszenty's Memoirs]. [no place] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 50–60. A hand-written comment in the right-hand corner of the first page notes the document's dissemination: "Sent to the Vatican Secretariat of State via the Vienna nunciature." An abstract was prepared for several South American diplomatic representations, such as the Bolivian Embassy. *Report.* Budapest, June 6, 1974. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-37054. 254–56. A French translation can also be found among Hungarian state security sources: L*a situation et les possibilités de l'Église en Hongrie: réflexions à propos de la parution des mémoires du Cardinal Mindszenty.* [no place] [no date] ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 61–72.

> credit of those who have done something: the bishops, the priests, the faithful willing to make a sacrifice, and the Vatican efforts which Mindszenty attacked, but which, in the long run, proved successful. [...] The framework is indeed narrow, but can be widened, even if it requires significant effort; this is what assigns real value to the episcopate, the clergy, and the aspirations of the Vatican. What Mindszenty implies by refuting the values of the Hungarian Church, with the gross misjudgments which make the self-sacrificing work of the Vatican at best doubtful before the clergy and their flock, only deepens the differences while creating distrust... [...] I'm convinced that the only way forward is the practice which has already begun and proven successful. The policy of slow conquest built on compromises may gradually widen the scope of the potential to preach the Gospel, which is the Church's actual mission.[39]

This document provides a very different assessment of the situation than that which "Barát" had, not much earlier, been offered without suspicion. According to the latter, the Hungarian Church was not paralyzed, but developing slowly. If this was indeed the document Nagy submitted to the Vatican, it would have been another example of the Eastern European reports reflecting the correctness of the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*, thus fulfilling the Hungarian authorities' expectations.

The same tone was set in Nagy's memorandum to the XXXII Jesuit General Congregation.[40] This document was compiled as disinformation together with György Kerkai, and its text was checked with the SOCHA.[41] The memorandum included such topics as "world peace" and the "social service of social progress," both of which were very important to Socialist Hungary. An entire chapter was devoted to the "assessment of Socialism" which

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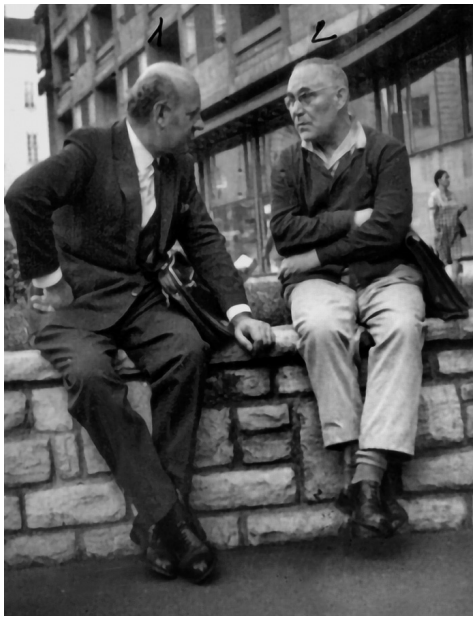
39 *Az egyház helyzete és lehetőségei Magyarországon: reflexiók Mindszenty bíboros Emlékiratai megjelenése alkalmából* [The situation and possibilities of the Church in Hungary: Reflection on occasion of the publication of Cardinal Mindszenty's Memoirs]. [no place] [no year] ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 59–60.

40 *Memorandum for the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.* Budapest, September 12, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 15–23. It was translated into French and Spanish: ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 25–39 and 40–49.

41 *Proposal.* Budapest, November 26, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 53–56.



Töhötöm Nagy and György Kerkai SJ in Budapest around 1977

> cannot be condemned based on criteria which we had turned against when its masses were fighting for human rights that had been left completely abandoned. We now acknowledge after the fact that they had and continue to have the right to social laws, which they had fought for without us, indeed under our attacks. Why hadn't we considered it just, and participated in forming their entire world? We rigidly taught that Communism contradicts human nature and therefore will disintegrate on its own. [...] Evolution has shown otherwise: it has smoothed the edges of Communism so now they call themselves Socialists, pushing the possibility to realize Communism into the far future. In this form, they are no longer showing any sign of disappearing, in fact they have established themselves.[42]

Moving on, we can discern one of Nagy's opinions he had expressed elsewhere, which also reveals his personal motivation:

42 *Memorandum for the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.* Budapest, September 12, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 19–20.

> It must be known that Socialism became the worst enemy yet of the Church because it didn't carry off theses, like every heretic, but rather, the faithful, in a social way, with social programs, it carried off our sons, our brothers.[43] The only solution: to go after them in their social system and claim some operational ground there, as otherwise we could not touch them. A while ago, the Society of Jesus was banned from China, because it wanted to integrate into Chinese society and their mindset. China remains pagan, even though it could have long been made Christian by using that method.[44]

Both Nagy and György Kerkai reached the following conclusion in the summary:

> ...we can say that we find it a basic principle, that the Society [of Jesus] shouldn't have power aspirations, but just offer service. [...] We see the official position of atheism manifesting in anticlericalism as the main obstacle in Communism. But we can discern several signs that this atheism is no longer as rigid and belligerent; even anticlericalism is finding resolution through dialogue and the long series of negotiations with the Vatican. Such mutual resolution will only increase if our enemies see in practice what the synod has stated multiple times: that we're neither the "militant" nor the "triumphant" but the "serving" Church.[45]

The memorandum for the General Congregation and the report for Archbishop Poggi reached their respective destinations with the help of Nagy's South American contacts. This time, he asked Alberto Rodríguez Nin, the Uruguayan Ambassador, to help him get the documents out of the country making it seem as though he were trying to do so illegally,

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43 Nagy previously touched upon this in *Church drifting into crisis*, which he had written for the Freemasons. The movements referred to here as "heretical" were discussed there as the intellectual currents of the Renaissance, Protestantism, and Freemasonry. In that text too, Nagy spoke about how Marxism had taken away the "masses" from the Church. See the chapter *"Disappearing clues: Töhötöm Nagy and the Hungarian Freemasonry."*

44 *Memorandum for the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.* Budapest, September 12, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 21–22.

45 Ibid. 23. In this way, Nagy reached the idea of a serving Church, albeit different than certain Protestant theologians and church leaders of the Kádár régime.

and needed Rodríguez Nin's assistance stemming from their good personal relationship. Rodríguez Nin duly travelled to Vienna on November 22, 1974 especially for this reason, and submitted the summary on Mindszenty and the memorandum to the Jesuit General Congregation for forwarding to Rome.[46] This enabled Nagy to remain above suspicion in the eyes of his Vatican partners.[47] He could also report to the authorities with no small satisfaction that "... the most significant result is that our multi-page, bold postulate is slithering along the great common sausage stuffer, and its flavors will appear as soon as the product emerges on the market. It is irrevocable and irreversible now. Maybe some Father in a committee is including my sentences at this moment in the text of the great common postulate."[48]

Nagy's journey to Rome was timed to coincide with the General Congregation which convened on December 2, 1974.[49] The trip was planned in detail, and a sort of 'to-do list' was drawn up, items on which included "orienting the Vatican Secretariat of State and the Jesuit Order." This meant meeting Archbishop Poggi and getting the most out of the General Congregation; gathering Church news, information, and, by request from the Vatican specialists—in state security jargon—"tip researching-analysis activities," i.e. spotting for new collaborators.[50]

Between December 6 and December 21, 1974, while in Rome, Nagy wrote a diary-like report for the authorities, making his description more lifelike and real-time.[51] We know from his report that Hungary was represented by Fr János Ádám,[52] Provincial Vicar of the Hungarian Jesuit diaspora at the XXXII. General Congregation, after the Hungarian gov-

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46 *Proposal.* Budapest, November 26, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 54. and Nagy's report on the events: *Report.* Budapest, November 28, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 73–76.

47 "We chose this mode of forwarding the material because both addressees had to be reassured that KŐMŰVES wasn't taking any unnecessary risks which would compromise them or himself." *Proposal.* Budapest, November 26, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 54.

48 *Roman affairs. 6–21 December 1974.* Budapest, 23 December 1974. OSZK Kt., f. 216/23. 13. and *Report.* Budapest, January 7, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 90.

49 O'Malley, *The Jesuits*, 104–106.

50 *Task list.* Budapest, November 27, 1974. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 57–64.

51 *Report.* Budapest, January 7, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 79–139. and fragmentarily *Roman affairs. 6–21 December 1974.* Budapest, December 23, 1974. OSZK Kt., f. 216/23.

52 János Ádám SJ (1927–2010) was a Jesuit. Forced to emigrate from Hungary in 1949, he became active in Canada and the US, serving as the Provincial General of the Hungarian Province between 1996 and 2002, after the fall of Communism.

ernment forbade Provincial Superior Fr Kollár from participating.[53] Nagy visited Fr Ádám, whom he had not personally met before, on December 8, 1974, but felt that he had not been successful, as Fr Ádám was very reserved with him.

After telling him of his own work, Nagy commented that he would one day like to return to the Society of Jesus. They discussed this at length, and it was confirmed that, if Nagy's wife died, there would be no theoretical obstacle, but Fr Ádám thought, as a first step, that Nagy would need to visit the Provincial Superior.[54] If the return to the Order was intended as an escape route, it did not bode well for him that he was referred to Fr Kollár, since Kollár has been avoiding Nagy, and made his Hungarian confreres avoid him since he had resurfaced in the country. Presumably Nagy knew just as well where to start as Fr Ádám did, however, the latter was just becoming familiar with his case. However, if Nagy's return to the Jesuit Order was to be accomplished pursuant to another state security mission, then suggesting the topic in an inadequate setting had achieved its goal: Fr Ádám barely knew anything about Nagy, had not read his book, did not show any real interest, and was more suspicious than anything else. All the same, the Order had become aware of Nagy's intentions.

Nagy's cool reception by Fr Ádám was compensated the next day by a joyful reunion with Nyisztor. They enthusiastically shared their thoughts with one another on the Hungarian and Roman ecclesiastical situation, Mindszenty, and the General Congregation. Then Nagy met with Archbishop Poggi. He had managed to receive an audience with Poggi through the Colombian Embassy in Rome, with Carlos Hernández recommending him. When the two met on December 19, 1974, Poggi was already familiar with his report, and after discussing the general as well as the ecclesiastical situation in Hungary, it was decided that Nagy should compile more material for him. "We agreed to that. Do what can be done and expand what can be expanded. This is all I have ever done and will continue to do

53 Fr Kollár eventually made it to Rome in 1977, one year before his death, and was able to receive Pedro Arrupe when he visited Hungary in July 1978. On this see Mihalik, *Egy történelmi látogatás*.

54 *Roman affairs. 6–21 December 1974.* Budapest, December 23, 1974. OSZK Kt., f. 216/23. 7–8. and *Report.* Budapest, January 7, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 84–90.

for the rest of my life.—I said."[55] Poggi made a deep impression on him, and Nagy would think about what should be included in his next memorandum for the rest of his diary-like report—and his trip to Rome.

Regarding Nagy's trip to Rome, his case officer, 1st Lt Knopp considered Nagy's ability to get their memorandum accepted by the General Congregation, as well as his securing of several pieces of the assembly's working material to be a great success.[56] He was further impressed that Nagy had gathered information from Hungarian clerical expatriate circles. What he found the most exciting, however, was the contact with Archbishop Poggi:

> It is proof of his excellent abilities, good tactical sense, that he exploited his potential to the maximum, the operation was a success. [...] KŐMŰVES got a hold of the General Congregation's semi-legal documents, and was assured that he would get the rest. He gathered information on the topics to be discussed, the expected decisions, the general conditions, and perspectives of the Order. What he found out is considered information of operative value. [...] We deem the greatest result of the operation the fact that KŐMŰVES was received by Archbishop Luigi Poggi, a leading functionary of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church in charge of extraordinary affairs. [...] We must separately assess the operative potential that emerged from Poggi's encouragement, which makes it possible to directly 'inform' the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.[57]

Nagy spent most of the spring and summer of 1975 compiling new disinformation material, while trouble overshadowed his family life. Krisztina decided to leave Hungary for good. Nagy tried to be available to his daughter through his various contacts in Rome and those proffered by the authorities, but it was difficult to accept the fact that Krisztina had not found her place in Hungary as he would have liked her to.[58] In his let-

55 *Report.* Budapest, January 7, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 132.
56 For his efforts, Nagy received a 3,000 Ft bonus. *Proposal.* Budapest, June 7, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 154.
57 *Report.* Budapest, February 25, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 91–98.
58 *Proposal.* Budapest, April 28, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 117–131. Krisztina relocated to Argentina in the end.

ters to her (naturally monitored by state security), sicknesses and bitterness are discussed with greater frequency.[59]

However, Nagy continued to do his utmost for Hungarian state security. In concert with his case officer, he asked for the highest quality and most professional materials to be compiled for Archbishop Poggi, as well as the assistance of others. Naturally, he received unsolicited help as well, as not only state security, but also the SOCHA attached great significance to the task. Sándor Rajnai, deputy head of Department III/I wrote, "KŐMŰVES, taking on Poggi's assignment, collected information among his contacts in the Hungarian Church, as we had instructed. We edited it together, rewriting and supplementing it with the material supplied by Department III/III-1 and Comrade Imre Miklós, President of the SOCHA. There was partial overlap, mostly on facts, but the deliberate distortions to them make them fit to create false illusions in the circles of the Secretariat of State."[60]

The final compilation, approved by Interior Minister András Benkei, was sent along the usual "illegal" route—via the Vienna nunciature with the help of Nagy's South American diplomatic friends—to Rome with the expectation that it would influence the negotiating position of Archbishop Poggi, who was then in regular dialogue with representatives of the Hungarian government.[61]

The material Nagy had supplied on the General Congregation was of much value to the SOCHA, even though one assessment stated: "[t]he operation of the General Congregation of the Jesuit Order has no effect on the Hungarian ecclesiastical political situation. The activities of Hungarian Jesuits in emigration do not surpass either in quantity or in quality the results of the Franciscan or the Benedictine Order, they have no defining impression on the emigres. Scattered priests living in Hungary in dwindling numbers make up no significant power as a community, but our

59 Krisztina Nagy did not remain in Rome, moving back to Argentina, where she was joined by her mother after Töhötöm's death. *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Krisztina Nagy.* Budapest, July 24, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 263/4–5.

60 *Proposal.* Budapest, July 3, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 139.

61 *Report.* Budapest, August 11, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 161. and *Report on the state of the Hungarian Catholic Church following the appointment of the new Bishops.* Budapest, June 6, 1975. ÁBTL III.-1.8. 41.

attention must be remained fixed on certain individuals who, either in diocesan service, or as civilians, are still active."[62]

The summary of the General Congregation which closed on March 7, 1975, and had used Nagy's material, stated in general that, "the doubts inside the Order [Society of Jesus] have grown into a crisis. In our view, the relationship between the Vatican and the Order has loosened. [...] During the three-month session of the Congregation, counter opinions and votes have made the outcome uncertain, and the Pope's multiple interferences also point this way. Blind discipline is more and more a thing of the past. The points of dispute were sketched, where changes had to be made to the issue of Old World vs New World, because the time is ripe. They probably formulated today's concept of mission."[63]

A Hungarian translation of the document *The Society's answer to the requirements of today* was annexed to the material on the Jesuit Order.[64] Information about internal problems—such as the declining number of vocations—and on personal, ecclesiastical, or even theological conflicts was always useful in the arsenal of the party-state for its ecclesiastical policy and therefore collected in a targeted manner. As a result, what was learned from Nagy was also deemed valuable. He himself expressed his satisfaction with his contribution on the General Congregation, purportedly commenting to Bishop József Udvardy[65] in Szeged:

> ...I told him I had submitted a postulate as well, 14 pages, to the General Congr., and it was approved and merged with the others, which is simply without parallel in the history of the Society. I remarked that I didn't want to appear too left-wing, for obvious reasons, so I wrote moderately, I made suggestions for the solidification of discipline, and the result was that my memorandum took the spotlight, and the decree

62 *Summary of the experiences of the 32. General Congregation of the Jesuits. 2 December 1974. – 7 March 1975.* Budapest, May 2, 1975. MNL OL XIX-A-21-c-143/3-1975 (89. d.)

63 Ibid. 4.

64 *Memorandum on the decree of the XXXII General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.* Budapest, November 16, 1976. MNL OL XIX-A-21-c-144/6-1976 (89. d.)

65 József Udvardy (1911–2000) was the Bishop of Csanád between 1969 and 1987. In 1976, he refused to act upon a state request to admonish his priests who were working with the youth. Cf.: [no name]: *Magyar egyház, merre tartasz?* [Whither, Hungarian Church?] In *Magyar Füzetek 18.* Paris, 1987.

> itself contains sharper language and innovation than what I had written about the same thing. So, I was justified to feel that my concept of the society coincides with the official concept of the Society of Jesus which gives me enormous confidence and strength.[66]

It was probably no accident that Nagy visited József Udvardy: the Csanád Bishop had been negatively referenced by the Hungarian delegation in July 1975 at the Hungarian-Vatican negotiations, attributing to him the less-than-positive news on Hungarian Sunday schools which had reached the Vatican.[67] According to Nagy's report to the authorities, Udvardy did indeed present himself as a supporter of reform processes and renewal within the Church, and went on to comment that they parted "in good spirits."[68]

Nagy's next assignment again concerned Poggi: He was to discover whether his report had reached the Archbishop, and if he had read it. Apparently, this was very important to local leading ecclesiastical-political figures, so they timed Nagy's trip to Rome a few days before Poggi's next negotiation in Budapest.[69] As such, Nagy and his wife arrived in the "Eternal City" on January 9, 1976, under the auspices of a tourist trip, during which Nagy arranged to meet Poggi on short notice, on January 14. As it turned out, the Archbishop did indeed receive and skim his report, greatly appreciating his efforts. As a sign of his satisfaction and trust, he asked Nagy to remain available, and supply him with information about the Church in Hungary. Not wanting to wait for him to gather material and compile a written document, Poggi solicited Nagy's verbal opinion on several bishops. After Nagy's prompt and revealing answers, Poggi asked

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66 *Trip to Szeged.* Budapest, December 21, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 242. As was mentioned previously, the memorandum was co-written with György Kerkai, but did not amount to 14 pages in Hungarian, or other translations.

67 "We have revealed the negative activities of Csanád diocesan József Udvardy." – states the SOCHA's report and describes their position in detail. *Report on the discussion with the Vatican commissioners.* and *Memorandum*. Budapest, July 9, 1975. MNL OL XIX-A-21-e-XXIX. f. 0022-1/g/1975 (32. d.)

68 *Trip to Szeged.* Budapest, December 21, 1975. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/3. 253.

69 Archbishop Poggi was a frequent guest in Budapest and participated in the Hungarian-Vatican negotiations in Rome. A few days after Nagy's visit to Rome, he negotiated in Budapest with Imre Miklós. Soós, *Az Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal*, 180. On Poggi's negotiations: *Daily pro memoria on the negotiation with the Vatican.* Budapest, January 19, 1976, 20., 23. MNL OL XIX-A-21-e-XXXI. f. 0022-2/c/1976 (32. d.)

about László Lékai, who was about to be appointed head of the Hungarian Catholic Church. Nagy, while emphasizing his own surprise and unpreparedness, spoke in his support.[70] Poggi finally asked him to write an analysis on the state of religious education in Hungary.[71] This revealed that the topic was not only of interest to the state and its ecclesiastical policy, but also the Vatican.

After Nagy returned, he directed his attention to this last task, gathering background material on religious education for Poggi, and for which he received plenty of guidance. The authorities had assessed that this was a topic of significant interest to the Archbishop and were certain that Nagy was not the Vatican's only source of information on the issue.[72] They therefore established a guideline: "[i]t isn't our goal for the compiled material to paint a realistic picture of the state of religious education. For the sake of credibility—since it must be considered that he's informed by priests and bishops—some accurate picture must be given, but the framework and limits thereof are determined by the SOCHA."[73]

This meant that compiling and editing the material took a longer time. There are multiple drafts in Nagy's written estate, underlining the complexity of that task.[74] The final version was sent to Rome late, in May of 1977, and, even then, only after the repeated urgings of Archbishop Poggi, following many stalled negotiations with the Interior Ministry and the SOCHA.[75]

In *A hitoktatás problémái Magyarországon* (The issues of religious education in Hungary), Nagy used several examples to illustrate and explain

70 He later summed up his thoughts on Lékai in writing. *The investiture of László Lékai Archbishop-Primate of Esztergom, 24 February 1976.* ÁBTL III.-1.8. 43.

71 Nagy submitted his report entitled *Rome, 9–25 January 1976.* ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 177–188. Lékai was appointed Archbishop of Esztergom on 10 February 1976.

72 *Report.* Budapest, January 28, 1976. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 189–195. and *Report on the negotiation with Vatican commissioners.* Budapest, 9 July 1975. MNL OL XIX-A-21-e-XXIX. dosszié 0022-1/g/1975 (32. d.)

73 *Report.* Budapest, January 28, 1976. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/6. 192.

74 *A hitoktatás problémái Magyarországon 1976 and 1977. [The issues of religious education in Hungary in 1976 and 1977].* ÁBTL III.-1.8. 41. András Keresztes compared the final version, which is known to state security as having been submitted, with these versions, and found significant differences. Keresztes [no year].

75 *Memorandum.* Budapest, July 8, 1977. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 63. and *A hitoktatás problémái Magyarországon, 1977. [The issues of religious education in Hungary in 1977].* ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 37–53.

the difficulties confronting Sunday schools in secularized Hungary in the 1970s, mentioning, among other factors, the end of the peasant way of life after collectivization, the emergence of suburbs and mass public housing,[76] and competition from Sunday television. Still, he argued, the *status quo* between Church and state remained intact, with the suggestions offered, such as potential development paths, not disputing the basic situation: "It is obvious that there is no 'Christian Marxism' just as there is no 'Marxist Christianity.' The two are contradictory. But this is not what we're talking about, the faithful don't support Socialism because of their faith, but because of its numerous reforms which spell historical progress. The Church sits down to negotiate, to bargain, to make concessions and compromises because there's no other way. Socialism looks at us the same way, it reckons with the fact that we exist, our influence remains large, and makes concessions as well."[77]

So, the compilation remained in step with state ecclesiastical policy in the Kádár era. Of course, owing to the lack of corroborating sources, there is no way to know whether it was this version Nagy ultimately sent to Rome. Never, even following several state security investigations, were any signs of sharing of classified infomation uncovered. No data was found that might cast serious doubts on Nagy's trustworthiness or loyalty to state security, either via overheard telephone conversations, opened letters, or other surveillance.[78] Accordingly, Nagy's network efforts continued uninterrupted throughout his final years.

Nagy had to ensure that his report reached its destination by embarking on yet another trip to Rome, which state security authorities arranged for between March 18 and March 26 of 1978.[79] Archbishop Poggi received Nagy almost immediately upon his arrival, on March 20, and naturally read the analysis, finding it useful. During their conversation, Nagy informed Poggi

76 These were the "panelház," elsewhere referred to as "Khruschëvka," or pre-fabricated tenement structures that continue to be a fixture of the post-Soviet landscape of Central and Eastern Europe.

77 *A hitoktatás problémái Magyarországon, 1977. [The issues of religious education in Hungary in 1977].* ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 48.

78 András Keresztes has discussed the possibility of Nagy being a double agent. Keresztes, "Tükör által...," 1471–1486. This author is bound by the research conventions of this book's genre and can only call attention to the lack of primary sources supporting such a hypothesis.

79 *Report.* Rome, March 26, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 205–215.

that Hungarian television had invited him to appear in the series *Századunk* (Our century) and discuss World War II and the following years pertaining to the search for a *modus vivendi*. Nagy wanted to know Poggi's opinion as to whether he could confirm his participation, and what he would and would not be able to discuss, since this period continued to have a bearing upon the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*. The two eventually agreed that Nagy would send him a draft of his television appearance, and Poggi would give his opinion.

Nagy felt that the Archbishop trusted him completely.

> My audience ended with this, and it was completely confidential and intimate. I exaggerated a little when I say we talked like old friends, because this wouldn't have been possible due to the mutual respect so characteristic of our entire behavior earlier as well as now. There was no way he would exit in front of me [...], he accompanied me all the way, and it's a big room!!! Up to the outside door which leads to the glazed outer corridor—this can be seen from St Peter's Square (a young Raphael painted the ceiling), and that's where we parted. It was obviously a huge honor, evidenced by the fact that the Swiss guard standing there clicked his heels so hard it made a bang, and the guard standing beyond the curve heard it and came to attention too with a bang (like this?)."[80]

Ultimately, this was Nagy's final trip to Rome, and, along with this farewell, he may have finally received something he had always wanted. At home, the ensuing months were dominated by organizing his television appearance, deliberating over possible questions and camera angles. Shooting took place on May 24, 1978, but state security only sent the draft to Poggi several months later, in October 1978.[81]

> 12 of them appeared before 9am, the entire crew. They took over the apartment, chose the location, and shooting commenced half an hour

80 *Report.* Rome, March 26, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/7. 210.

81 *A draft of the questions of the TV documentary "Századunk" and the answers to be given.* Budapest, September 27, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/8. 33–43. and in Spanish: *Esquema de precuntas de la serie de documentos „nuestro siglo" de la TV.* Budapest, 6 de octubre de 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 270–281. On *Századunk* see Hanák and Kövér, "Biográfia és Oral History," 92–100. The film is available at: OSZK Collection of Historical Interviews 625.

> later. Everything interested them: my life in the Order, my studies, our preparation for KALOT with Fr Kerkai. [...] But then came the main topic: my sneaking across the frontline. They went into detail here, how I was received, what I said, what the outcome was. And we went through reel after reel. When I got to the part where I went to Rome, we were past the tenth reel, every reel is 5 minutes. Then they sent someone to TV headquarters to get more reels. They asked me in detail about my involvement with the Vatican. [...] Mindszenty was mentioned, but they were only interested in the circumstances of his appointment, because later, when they reach 1948, there will be a new shoot specifically about Mindszenty. [...] They shot 16 reels in total, which is about an hour and a half of material.[82]

Owing to Nagy's deteriorating health, they did not wait for Poggi's answer, with Dezső Radványi and Mihály Mátrai preferring to go ahead with shooting *Egy jezsuita páter vallomásai egy hercegprímásról* (The confessions of a Jesuit priest about a Primate)[83] in January 1979. However, they were unable to complete the planned second part of the film: On February 21, 1979, Töhötöm Nagy suddenly died of heart failure.[84]

3.

Since Paulina's request to the Jesuit Provincial Superior for a religious funeral was declined,[85] the ceremony was held by a diocesan priest at Farkasréti cemetery in Budapest on March 2, 1979. Takáts described the event to the authorities in the following words: "[t]here were many people at the funeral: several Jesuits (Dr Imre Mócsy, former university professor in Rome, János Tamás, the Jesuit Provincial Superior, József Németh), former KALOT leadership (Sándor Meggyesi, Dr György Farkas, pensioners,

82 *Századunk*. Budapest, May 31, 1978. ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/4. 239.

83 *Making a TV documentary exposé on Cardinal Mindszenty. A proposal*. Budapest, January 10, 1979. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/8. 48–53. The film is available at: OSZK Collection of historical Interviews, Hungarian Motion Picture Treasure Collection 1441.

84 *Proposal*. Budapest, May 7, 1979. ÁBTL 3.2.1. Bt-1584/8. 59.

85 Fr Pálos discussed this in an interview with the historian Balázs Csíky on October 1, 2004. Csíky, who died young, and who wrote Zoltán Nyisztor's biography, and so necessarily touched on the life. Adriányi and Csíky, *Nyisztor Zoltán*, 270–71. Imre Mócsy writes about the same in a letter. Imre Mócsy's letter to an unknown recipient. [no place] March 3, 1979. Published by: Tóth, I., *Emlékezés*, 1984. 160–161.

János Hajdók, writer, etc.) people from the Akadémiai editorial office, and others from various South American embassies."[86]

Like so many things, however, Nagy had more than one funeral: his wife had his ashes transported to Buenos Aires when she returned to Argentina, and, years later, after she reached an agreement with the Freemasons, they were scattered around a locust tree that grew in the garden of the Hogar Bernardino Rivadavia orphanage run by the Argentine Grand Lodge.[87]

„He doesn't rest here,
(not even here does he rest),
he's off searching somewhere.
Only his memory remains here."

—he wrote about his imagined grave, once upon a time.[88]

86 *Information.* Tatabánya, March 30, 1979. ÁBTL 3.1.2. M-41644/1. 249.
87 According to Krisztina Nagy.
88 *Öt életem és egy halálom* [My five lives and single death]. [no place] March 1967. OSZK Kt., f. 216/145.

Epilogue

So ended Töhötöm Nagy's life, in all its ambiguity. He never solved the mystery of who he really was. Perhaps, he was not a single person "behind multiple masks" and his personality was not simply molded by the circumstances. Taking on multiple identities and keeping all of them in play might very well have been his own decision. We can assume that this was the case, as he wrote about doing so in the new foreword to *Church and Communism*, which was slated for publication in Hungarian, but never made it to the presses:

> [I]n my successive lives, I have never stripped off my former one, but in putting on the new one, kept the substance of the previous one. First, I was just a Jesuit, then I became a Mason, keeping everything worth keeping from my Jesuit past (principles, friends, contacts, and my love for the Society). Later, I took the first two [Jesuit and Mason], with their principles and connections, to the Communist world, while taking on everything from Communism that was good and progressive. I was like a river: it begins alone, and flows together with another stream, then a third one flows into it, and they go on together, ever richer, fuller, rolling with stronger currents, between wider shores.
> I remained a Jesuit throughout, but inside, in fact, letting them inside of me and living it personally, I experienced Freemasons and Communists. They marched through me, and I watched, soaking up from both all that's true, eternal, and good. And I found so many positive things! Much more than I could have even suspected based on the great endeavor.

We will allow the reader's internal dialogue with Töhötöm Nagy's biography to make what it will of these lines: Identity construction after the

fact, a desire to exonerate oneself, a unique and arbitrary interpretation of an attempt at identification stemming from Jesuit historical roots, a risky and dramatic solitary venture, the gradual disorientation of a personality, its moral decay, and finally its disintegration, or just the opposite: the success of an attempt at the synthesis and consistency of intentions, the utopistic humanism; or, if you will, the faith of a historical actor with a strong sense of mission.

On the one hand, this book sets out to explore, document, and reconstruct the events, background, and contexts of a life while also striving to consistently use a narrative language capable of conveying the turbulent life and complex personality of Töhötöm Nagy. This is primarily achieved through the text, but perhaps also to some extent goes beyond the primary references included here. Parallel to this, we have also sought to help the reader by clarifying the criteria for forming an opinion, and by promoting the historical reception of Töhötöm Nagy. In this intentionally nonjudgmental biography, the historian has done her best to relay that there is not a simple or single life story for anyone, let alone Töhötöm Nagy.

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Subject Index

Name Index

The life of Töhötöm Nagy (1908–1979), Jesuit, Mason, and secret service agent, offers fascinating insights into interwar Hungary, the Catholic Church and Vatican diplomacy, Freemasonry, and the activities of communist state security service. As a young Jesuit Nagy was one of the leaders of a successful Catholic youth movement in interwar Hungary. After World War II he played an important role acting as an intermediary between the Vatican, the Red Army, and the Hungarian Catholic Church. After being sent to South America, he was attracted by liberation theology, but left the Society of Jesus, joined the Freemasons, and did social and philanthropic work in the slums of Buenos Aires. However, in the late 1960s he agreed to work for the Hungarian state security service in return for his repatriation. This latter period is reconstructed from the files of the Historical Archives of State Security in Budapest. Éva Petrás writes with empathy but with a sense of distance of the courage and restless energy of her subject. Her discussion of the limits of free choice and Nagy's intense struggle to live a meaningful life make this biography breathtaking.

"In this much-anticipated biography, Éva Petrás presents us with the adventurous life of the Hungarian Jesuit Töhötöm Nagy. Tracing the twists and turns of his life, the reader simultaneously delves into the 20th century history of Hungary, the Hungarian Catholic Church, Freemasonry, South America, and communism. Painstakingly researched in the Vatican and three continents, and written in a beautiful, readable style, Dr. Petrás's book is not only an important contribution to historiography but can also be recommended wholeheartedly to readers sensitive to history and human destinies."

Judith Kesserű Némethy, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New York University

"Töhötöm Nagy was one of the most colorful figures of modern Hungarian Catholicism. The central issue of his life was the practice-oriented examination of the possible frameworks and forms of social policy to support the underprivileged, economically and socially exploited strata of society. This is what he sought as a Jesuit priest, as a Freemason, and as an agent of the communist secret service in Hungary, Rome, and South America. Nagy was both a hero and perpetrator, true friend and traitor, patriot, and citizen of the world."

Attila Pók, chairman of the Academic Council of the European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity, and senior researcher at the Institute of Advanced Study, Kőszeg, Hungary

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Éva Petrás is a historian, and Senior Research Fellow at the Committee of National Remembrance, in Budapest, Hungary. She has been working on the social policies of the 20th century and on the history of the Hungarian Catholic Church for more than two decades.

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