

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities

THESES

OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

**The History of the Hungarians of Vojvodina Based on the Texts of
Pionírújság**

by **Enikő Gruber**

Doctoral School of History

Dr. Gábor Erdódy Dsc, professor and Head of Department

Doctoral Programme of Cultural History

Dr. László Kósa MHAS, professor emeritus, Head of the Doctoral Programme

Chair of the Committee: Dr. László Kósa MHAS, professor

Appointed opponents: Dr. Julianna Ispánovics Csapó PhD, associate professor

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Dr. Ferenc Mák PhD, research fellow

Supervisor: Dr. Csaba Kiss Gy. Dsc, professor

Budapest, 2017

I. Choice of topic, research objective and methodology

My interest in the topic is clearly led by personal, autobiographical motivations. I was born in Vojvodina during the time when the second Yugoslav republic seemed to be disbanding more and more. Already as a child, I was curious to know what impacts made the Hungarians of Vojvodina to have a strong attachment to Yugoslavia, which was still around in the 1990s.

My dissertation investigates the early years of Tito's Yugoslavia, 1947-1958, which was a highly significant period from a cultural history perspective. In order to build up a positive image, the leaders of the new state – emphasizing the differences from the previous one – implemented several provisions already in the first years. Some of these concerned the ethnic minorities, including the Hungarians of Vojvodina. However, the primary aim of all these provisions was to sow the seeds of “brotherhood and unity” and consolidate the Yugoslav identity; and thus, to legitimize the artificially constructed South Slav state. The success of these efforts can be evaluated based on census data. Looking at the numbers, it can be clearly stated that Vojvodina had always been in the forefront in this matter. In 1961, 3000 inhabitants claimed to be Yugoslav. This number increased to 167 000 by 1981, and there was a growing tendency even at the time of the 1991 census¹. All this implies that the manipulation which started at the time of the founding of the state, and which was always present in the socialist Yugoslavia, was successful. We do not have specific data on how many Hungarians identified as Yugoslav; therefore, only their public roles and social interactions can tell us about the impact of the period's politics.

The aim of my research is to contribute to the understanding of individuals who are dedicated to the idea of Yugoslavism, and to prove that the identity of Vojvodinian Hungarians was significantly shaped by the state propaganda. As it is known, a state governed on the grounds of political ideology tries to socialize the members of minority groups to better match the state's interests by influencing their emotions and collective consciousness. In the case of success, individuals continue to live their lives according to those norms and values which ensure the smooth continuance of the status quo. A person conditioned so will adapt to this status quo both regarding personal characteristics and habitus².

¹ Spasovski, Milena–Kicošev, Sasa–Živković, Dragica. 1995. *The Serbs in the Former SFR of Yugoslavia*. In: *The Serbian Questions in The Balkans*. Belgrade: University of Belgrade publisher – Faculty of Geography. Retrieved from: <https://www.rastko.rs/istorija/srbi-balkan/spasovski-kicosev-zivkovic-sfry.html> (2017.06.28.)

² Enikő Gruber (ed.). 2008. *Hódi Sándor 100 interjú tükrében*. Zenta: Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet, p.146.

Analyzing the place and role of a person within a given social framework, one must elaborate on the category of social identity, as “*this is one of the most important psychic mediating constructions between the individual and society*”³. By definition, identity is self-integrity, which we can only apply to society in a metaphoric sense. However, the protection of continuity can be considered one of its essential components. Without assuming the identity of the self and of other individuals around, the individual would not be able to reproduce or reform social relations. The sense of belonging assured by social identity frees one from uncertainty, and the interaction between processes of identifying or rejecting to identify establishes the definition of the self. Identities of gender, nationality, religion and ideology are acquired through social interactions, which then become the basis of comparison for determining the position of others and the self within the society⁴. The individual has as many frameworks of reference and identities as the number of their roles. In this case – in the context of my research – Hungarian, Vojvodinian, Yugoslav, child and pupil at the same time.

The mission of culture is to widen the frameworks of the identity-in-progress, and then to engrave them, since it can be considered one of the most essential instruments for that function. “*It creates knowledge and reality for the individual to ensure that life is livable*”⁵. This mediation of values occurs with the help of different groups within society; therefore, the individual identifies with the context, and with the habits and ideology thereof. This way it is not necessary to formulate their own approach or to continuously monitor their actions and attitudes. Anything that stands in opposition to the norms they or their community follow will be simply neglected. Facts only gain meaning through the filter of collective consciousness⁶. Therefore, it is important to know what kind of collective identity a given community has, who can have influence on it, and what sort of culture is mediated towards them.

I chose the weekly paper *Pionírújság* [Pioneer News] to be in the focus of my research, and did so for several reasons. First of all, the retrospective analysis of print media – in this case, a children’s newspaper – provides the researcher with a number of opportunities, and the analytical process can also take many different forms. At the same time, newspapers, magazines and journals always act as the imprint of a given period. They do not only record changes within society, but by affecting readers, they also become instruments of influence, and thus, even more important. In

³ Ferenc Pataki. 1982. *Az én és a társadalmi azonosságtudat*. Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, p. 248.

⁴ György Csepeli. 2001. *Szociálpszichológia*. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, p. 319.

⁵ Enikő Gruber (ed.). 2008. *Hódi Sándor 100 interjú tükrében*. Zenta: Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet, p.71.

⁶ Enikő Gruber (ed.). 2008. *Hódi Sándor 100 interjú tükrében*. Zenta: Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet, pp.71-72.

1947, there were seven Hungarian language newspapers in Vojvodina: *Magyar Szó* [Hungarian Word], *Híd* [Bridge], *7 Nap* [7 Days], *Dolgozó Nő* [Working Woman], *Ifjúság Szava* [Word of Youth], *Föld Népe* [People of the Earth] and *Pionírújság* [Pioneer News]⁷. The analyses so far, however, have only focused on publications targeted to adults, and the children's newspaper in the focus of my research has not been studied before. I consider it expedient to do research on it, as this print product might soon become forgotten completely. There is only one place where all the volumes can be found in one collection: in the editorial office of *Jó Pajtás*⁸ [Good Friend] in Vojvodina. The collection, however, is not entirely complete, and it is not accessible to the public either. The microfilm collection of the National Széchényi Library only preserves the volumes of 1947-48. Since *Pionírújság* constitutes an elemental part of Vojvodinian Hungarian cultural history, it would be a pity to forget about it.

Throughout the analysis of *Pionírújság*, my aim is to show with the help of specific examples which articles, editorials, studies and literary or light readings shaped the political socialization and development of children. My starting point is the assumption that a children's newspaper can have an important role from a pedagogical perspective; and therefore, it can help to reconstruct what the concept of childhood was like in a certain period. Seeing what they read can help to draw conclusions on what sorts of moral and social values were channeled towards them. The leaders of the second Yugoslav state considered printed media an instrument to influence people right from the first moment, and they only had one aim with it: to reeducate the population. Starting from there, this dissertation puts the following questions into the core of the analysis: What notion of homeland did *Pionírújság* offer to children? What kind of self-concept was encouraged by the articles? How often were Hungarian peculiarities featured and in what context? What are the symbols and themes which primarily aimed to consolidate the Yugoslav identity? What kind of pictures supported influencing potential of the texts? To what extent did the Tito cult promote Yugoslav ideology? To what extent are daily politics reflected in the published literary works?

I attempt to answer these questions with the method of content analysis, whose application to practical issues can be traced back to the years of World War II. In that period, the aim was to enhance the efficiency of intelligence by revealing messages hidden in texts. Its popularity has been continuous ever since, as it is suitable for the analysis of any kind of text. With the help of content analysis, "*by a systematic and objective process, we draw such conclusions from the*

⁷ Valéria Balázs–Arth. 2016. *A bácskai magyar sajtó és könyvkiadás irodalmi vetületei 1947–1952 között*. Doctoral dissertation. Manuscript, p. 4.

⁸ *Jó Pajtás* is the legal successor of *Pionírújság*.

*recurring features in messages – texts – which are not openly stated in the message, but which can be read from the structure and way of coding, and which can be supported with data extracted through other methods (not content analysis) ”*⁹. The study is mainly quantitative, but the results can be interpreted in a qualitative manner as well. Studying the number of occurrences of a symbol in a text is a quantitative method; however, it is a qualitative matter what we put in the focus of the research, and what kind of conclusions we draw. In my research, I primarily apply the quantitative method, since in the context where *Pionírújság* was born, the most significant factor was the propagandistic intention and the constant emotional effect of the messages. Nuanced expressions were not tolerated by censorship at that time, as it considered them unacceptable and politically incorrect. My analysis was guided by grounded theory¹⁰, according to which the theoretical framework is derived from empirical data. The aim of this method is to enhance the reliability of qualitative research, and to show that it is possible to set up theories based on observations, and to reach social regularities from individual similarities. In my analysis, I aimed at further considering the results of the quantitative method to grasp qualitative content as well.

II. The structural outline of the dissertation

In order to clearly answer why a certain article got published and what hidden message it was supposed to mediate, we need to know whose worldview is reflected in it and what the social context is. I structured the dissertation considering this, resulting in four main chapters:

In the introduction, I explain the reason and the aim of the choice of topic together with the methodology which guided me throughout the research project.

In the second, descriptive chapter I discuss those topics which are essential to outline the context and which influence the interpretation. This chapter includes the history of the Yugoslav ideology, the historical background, and the main characteristic features of the structure of society in the Yugoslav state. In order to draw conclusions, I consider it crucial to know how the system treats the minorities living within the state – in this case, the Hungarians of Vojvodina –and the main characteristics of their cultural life. What happened in institutions of culture and education, just like churches or literature, had a major impact on their everyday lives, therefore, it is important to see how much the activities of these institutions were influenced by political leaders, and what

⁹ László Antal. 1976. *A tartalomelemzés alapjai*. Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, p. 15.

¹⁰ The theory was developed by American sociologists Anselm L. Strauss and Barney Glaser. Their work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, published in 1967, was an important milestone in the history of qualitative research.

principles they followed throughout their operations. I also consider it essential to divide up the analyzed period into different parts. During the period when *Pionírújság* operated, the structure of society underwent major changes in the country, while the foreign policy of Yugoslavia also shifted. These had an impact on the content of the newspaper. For example, one of the most significant events at the time was the conflict between Tito and Stalin, whose every detail can be traced on the pages of *Pionírújság*. To understand the editorial concept, it is important to know the situation of Hungarian printed media products of the period, and what position *Pionírújság* occupied among them. Although it was a children's newspaper, the function it served within society was highly similar to newspapers targeted at other groups.

Since mass communication and power are closely connected, and since propaganda is one of the most important instruments of manipulation, I found it inevitable to devote a separate chapter to these topics. The discussion of these makes up the third chapter of the dissertation.

The fourth chapter can be considered the main part of the dissertation, as it includes the detailed analysis of *Pionírújság*. I found that first I need to position the newspaper by finding its place and role within society in order to find examples to support my hypotheses. Following that principle, I devoted subchapters to the context in which the newspaper was born, to the structure of *Pionírújság*, and to the editors themselves. Then, using the method of content analysis, I chose keywords that allowed me to put the analyzed corpus into a framework; and thus, to compile a body of facts which unambiguously support my hypotheses.

III. Sources

The primary source of this research project were the issues of *Pionírújság* published between 1947 and 1958. The texts and pictures of the 280 issues of twelve volumes provide a faithful reflection of the era, therefore, I could easily support my hypotheses with their help.

Regarding methodology, my dissertation relies heavily on Pál Majoros's work *A kutatómódszertan alapjai* [The foundations of research methodology], but it also draws on the works of László Antal, Klaus Krippendorff, József Lehota, Mariann Móri and Peter K. Manning.

The discussion of history, ideology and cultural history, which puts the subject of this study into context, is based on the works of the following authors: Enikő A. Sajti, Lajos Arday, Ferenc Arató, András Balogh, László Balogh, Nándor Bárdi, László Bíró, Márton Csanády, László Domonkos, György Éger, Csilla Fedinec, Ferenc Gereben, Ferenc Glatz, László Gulyás, Zoltán

Hajdú, Árpád Hornyák, József Juhász, John R. Lampe, Orsolya L. Nagy, Emil Niederhauser, István Nyomárkay, Richárd Papp, Béla Pomogáts, Oszkár Roginer, Ignác Romsics, Gábor Salacz, György Schöpflin, Balázs Sipos, Péter Sipos, Dénes Sokcsevits, László Szarka, Ildikó Szondi, Csaba Utasi, Gábor Vajda and Péter Vukman. Regarding Vojvodinian Hungarian sources, I relied on articles on history, political science and education policy by Antal Hegedűs, Sándor Mészáros, Zoltán Mészáros, Nándor Major, Lajos Tóth and János Vékás, and I also drew on the works of Valéria Balázs-Arth, János Bányai, István Bodrits, Imre Bori, Piroska S. Csáky, Zoltán Dévavári, László Gerold, Miklós Hornyik, Julianna Ispánovics Csapó, Katalin Káich, Zoltán Kalapis, Ferenc Mák, István Szeli and Kornél Szenteleky. I would also like to highlight the studies of the Serbian authors Alojz Ivanišević, Srđan Cvetković, Ljubodrag Dimić, Ranko Končar, Dejan Đokić, Vuk Vinager and Ugo Vlaisavjević.

To review the connection between power and mass communication, I used the works of Mónika Andok, Péter Bajomi-Lázár, Béla Buda, György Csepeli, James Curran, Mihály Gálik, Ferenc Pataki, Karl Erik Rosengern, Tamás Szecskő and Tamás Terestyéni.

IV. Results

The printed products of the half decade following the war and of the 1950s were all defined by communist ideology, not only in Yugoslavia, but in all socialist countries. This was the period when everything was subordinated to the ruling party and to the ideology of brotherhood and unity, and when the individual was required to be servile and easily integrable to the system. Journals, newspapers, and literary publications had to mediate the standpoint of the leaders, primarily focusing on internal affairs. *Magyar Szó* was the most important of the Vojvodinian Hungarian printed products to serve Tito's system, but the children's newspaper *Pionírújság* was established for the same function. The propaganda of the era has been researched from a number of aspects, but these analyses mainly focused on products targeted at adults. I argue that the newspaper which I studied is also an important source, as manipulation and its instruments can be traced in it the same way. The influence of the system is beyond question, since they had a firm idea of what they want to mediate towards children. This defined who could appear in the newspaper and who could not. The same tendency can be seen in literature and history as well, which also had an impact on the identities of the Vojvodinian Hungarian pupils within the framework of the second Yugoslav state.

The aim of my research was to study the impact *Pionírújság* had on identity. I did this based on predetermined points of view, and keywords helped me to define the scope of my themes. This was an inevitable step, since with a corpus of this size and with an endless set of topic options one needs to clarify the focus of research, as it is impossible elaborate on all the potential themes.

I primarily focused on how the notion of homeland appears in *Pionírújság*. I was curious to find out what they understand by homeland, how they define it, and in what textual context it appears. Patriotism was one of the leading ideas behind the pioneer movement; thus, the indoctrination of it was considered important. On the pages of *Pionírújság*, homeland exclusively meant the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Its appearance was in all cases accompanied by the thought of suffering, together with highlighting the necessity of empathy and gratitude, all of which helped to enforce and emphasize the importance of the sense of belonging. As the leading message of the propaganda of Tito's Yugoslavia these ideas served to oppress all sorts of nationalist efforts. Resulting from this, it is not only the Hungarian notion of homeland – an important element of the Hungarian identity – which is missing from *Pionírújság*, but even the idea of Vojvodinian life is absent. I also considered it important to study which dates were always kept in the center of attention, and I found that Yugoslav history was in the forefront in this respect as well. November 29 was the most frequently mentioned date, as it was commemorated annually, but I would also highlight July 7, the start of the Yugoslav Partisan fight. Saluting the birth of the socialist state, *Pionírszövetség* [Pioneer Association] held the inauguration of its new members on November 29 every year, further allowing to engrave the date into the collective consciousness. Looking for significant events in Hungarian history, one can find references to the Revolution of 1848-49 and Dózsa's peasant revolt, but these were also mentioned from a perspective that was in line with the Yugoslav ideology. In the first volume of *Pionírújság*, before the split from Stalin, three reports were published on Yugoslav-Hungarian relations, but later the topic proved not to be worthy of even mentioning. Analyzing the notion of homeland, it can be concluded that the expression only appears in the context of the Yugoslav state; and thus, it is clearly connected to the Yugoslav identity. Hungarian identity, as it appears in *Pionírújság*, is limited to the freedom of language use, whose importance is often highlighted.

In communist states, cults of personality often contributed to the consolidation of ideology. In Yugoslavia, the respect surrounding Josip Broz Tito and the Partisans became an unquestionable part of everyday life. His person was seen as a hero who led the country towards a better future. As the primary leader of the state, he had so much power that under his political regime, Yugoslavism converted to Titoism, which was a synthesis of traditional Balkan societies, Western

ideologies and Stalinism¹¹. Tito was also considered the guardian of children, among many other qualities. Propaganda often exhausted the potentials of this image, as he often appeared on photographs surrounded by children. His person was also associated with feelings of gratitude and empathy. His difficult childhood was often discussed together with his honorable and self-sacrificing personality. I studied his presence in *Pionírújság* based on his appearances on the cover, articles and poetry written to him. Out of 280 issues, he is featured on the front page of 14, 5% of all issues. Although this does not seem much, even an annual appearance is significant considering that *Pionírújság* is a children's newspaper. He is most often featured on the cover of the May 15 issue, on the occasion of his birthday, which was a celebration all around the country. Even more important than his cover appearances are, however, the ways he appears on the rest of the pages. Besides educational articles, there often appeared writings by children praising Tito's greatness. There were works written on him in every imaginable literary genre. But it was not only direct mentions of him: he also often appeared in the form of indirect references. Due to all this, he is the most often recurring theme in the newspaper, which is also supported by quantitative evidence. This fact clearly proves that his person was used as an instrument to consolidate the commitment to communist ideology.

Literature always had a capacity to influence thought; therefore, it has often been used for propaganda purposes. I investigated the role of literature in *Pionírújság* starting from this fact. Primarily, I was interested in the proportions of Hungarian, Vojvodinian Hungarian and Yugoslav literature, which great poets had a chance to be published in *Pionírújság* and what was the topic of their literary works. Based on the study, it can be concluded, that even within this category, agitation and the Yugoslav ideology are also present. As a result of this study, we can say that 45% of the works were Vojvodinian Hungarian, 35% other Hungarian, and 20% Serbian. Regarding themes, the three categories are almost identical. Most of the works call for revolution and for fight against oppression, emphasize the importance of the working class, and praise the current political system. The Vojvodinian Hungarian works were clearly commissioned, which is also proved by the list of titles. The reason why their proportion is important is that this is one of the main instruments to widen the frameworks of the newly evolving identities, and thus, have key importance.

Efforts to strengthen the Yugoslav identity were mainly focusing on displaying themes connected to historical events, but discussing everyday politics also served a similar function. At

¹¹ Zoltán Mészáros. 2008. *A korai titoizmus propagandája*. Szabadka: Életjel Kiadó, p.27.

the same time, they considered it equally important to call children's attention to memorable dates in history and to popular national heroes. In this case too, I studied what is this category filled with. Articles about history mainly tell about the events of World War II and communist activities. There was an effort to keep the Partisan myth alive, whose characters were surrounded by a certain pathos. When studying the definition of Yugoslavness, I did not only use narration analysis to investigate the content, but I also dealt with the pictorial manifestations of Yugoslav symbols.

Since content that appears on a regular basis have a larger significance (as they seem more important), they have a fuller potential to grab the attention of the target group. Analyzing the recurring characteristics of the texts of *Pionírújság*, it can be concluded based on the quantitative data that communist content is overrepresented to such an extent that the children's newspaper clearly served the consolidation of the Yugoslav identity. The *Pionírújság* was used a tool for disseminating ideology. This can be proved by the newspaper's thematization, visual image and its overall picture.