

Pascal Fontaine

**The Voyage of
Hungarian Christian
Democracy to
the Heart of Europe**

HUNGARIAN CHAPTERS

Barankovics István Alapítvány

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The Voyage of Hungarian Christian Democracy to the Heart of Europe

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FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Navigare necesse est: to sail is necessary, and riding today's wild waves we are increasingly eager to know where we came from and where we are heading. We seek answers to the questions of our time, and our predecessors can help us in this endeavour. They have been there and done that: they have walked the social, moral and intellectual paths that are presented to the reader in this comprehensive publication. It is, if you like, a guidebook, and one that satisfies both academic and respectable non-academic interest in the very essence of Christian democracy.

The István Barankovics Foundation was established in 2006 as the party foundation of the Christian Democratic People's Party. Its purpose is to promote and disseminate information on Christian democratic thoughts and ideas, and to strengthen the democratic features of political culture in Hungary. The foundation supports the task of uncovering Christian democracy's origins, carries out academic activities aimed at addressing contemporary challenges, and also organizes its own research projects. The *Christian Democracy Knowledge Base project* was launched in 2012 and with it we laid down the groundwork of our digital encyclopaedia, the *Christian Democracy Knowledge Base*. This is a unique undertaking in Hungary, and with it we strive to present a comprehensive history of Christian democracy, its traditions in public life, and its policy-shaping endeavours. It also allows us to use modern tools and technology to support academic orientation in the realm of Christian politics.

As part of our *Christian Democracy Knowledge Base project* and with the kind support of the European People's Party, we published Pascal Fontaine's *Voyage to the Heart of Europe (1953-2009)*, originally published in French by Racine Publishing in 2009, and since translated into several languages of the European Union. This book closes a gap in Hungarian technical literature through its detailed exploration of a key accomplishment in the history of European Christian democracy, i.e. the creation of the European Union, including the history of European Christian democrats and that of the European People's Party up to 2009. In the extended Hungarian edition, which is now being published separately in English, we have added the history of Christian democracy in Hungary, a journey that in many ways differs from the core European experience. Preparing these chapters required significant additional archival investigation, which was undertaken by the members of the knowledge base research team. Their efforts to reveal the recent past would not have been possible without support from the European People's Party and the Christian Democratic People's Party, for which we are incredibly grateful. We would also like to thank the technical reader of the Hungarian chapters, *Lajos Izsák* and the proof-reader of the English translation, *Éva Petrás* for their quick and accurate work; the editor of the Hungarian edition, *Rita Mária Kiss* for coordinating the work of the research team; the authors of the Hungarian chapters, *Róbert Szabó, Éva Petrás and Rita Mária Kiss* for their diligent research; and last but not least our research assistant, *Katalin Lukácsi* for her help on a wide range of matters.

I recommend this latest publication of the István Barankovics Foundation to researchers of the topic, to academic libraries and to doctoral courses safe in the belief that it will enrich and expand our joint knowledge of the international and domestic history of Christian democracy. Further, I recommend this book to all of those who were shapers or stakeholders of the events in Hungary's recent past, and also to anyone who simply wants dependable information on our shared voyage to the heart of Europe.

Dr. András Gábor Szényei
Vice Chairman, István Barankovics Foundation

FOREWORD TO THE HUNGARIAN CHAPTERS

Since it was first published, Pascal Fontaine's "*Voyage to the Heart of Europe*" has been translated into several world languages. Still, the Hungarian edition is unique, as the original text has been extended with a presentation of the history of Christian democracy in Hungary – thanks to the *István Barankovics Foundation's Christian Democracy Knowledge Base project*. Christian democrats in West Europe were pioneers in laying the foundation of post-World War II Europe, while the fate of their counterparts in East Central Europe was drifted to a very different direction: their journey to the European Union was forced to lead through countless bypasses. The Hungarian authors of this book, members of the *Christian democracy Knowledge Base project*, endeavoured to present the national characteristics of this parallel history, as much as scope limitations allowed. This paper presents the journey starting in the 1930s with the rise of the Democratic People's Party (1944-1949), an organization that demonstrated outstanding political performance in the region, continuing with the inevitable destruction of that party – a necessity resembling the storyline of classic Greek tragedies. Then we look at the history of the party's re-launch in 1989, scrutinizing the journey through European integration. Finally, the West and East European streams of Christian democracy meet again in the parliamentary faction of the European People's Party, "*in the heart of Europe*".

The introductory paper of *Éva Petrás* reviews the history of the ideology in an international and domestic context, examining the rise of Christian democracy in Hungary as part of its European development. The paper also scrutinizes how the unique features of Hungary's political and social history shaped this political idea that fundamentally renewed the presence of Christianity in politics everywhere. *Róbert Szabó's* paper looks at the history of the Christian Democratic People's party (subsequently renamed as Democratic People's Party), a uniquely successful political organization in East Central Europe after 1945, even if their success was short-lived. *Róbert Szabó's* work summarizes the results of his own research and the key findings of domestic technical literature on this subject. The academic processing of the Barankovics Party's history is almost fully complete. However, as further documents and writings from István Barankovics were found in Vince Tomek's heritage in Rome, the availability of these documents for research opened new professional perspectives for the author. The results of this research have also been incorporated into this study. Events and developments in the single-party dictatorship are referenced in essays discussing the post-1989 era.

While the Christian democratic aspects of the coalition period are widely known in academic circles and the processing of the history of the single-party dictatorship from a Christian democratic view has started already, the time of the political system change and the subsequent years are just beginning to draw attention from researchers. With the exception of some pioneering publications, the recent political history of the KDNP is almost entirely unexplored. One key endeavour of our research group was to begin closing this gap. We could not undertake to write a party history with a systematic approach owing to several reasons.

Still, the two other papers in this book and the chronology of the KDNP (intended to serve as a review) rely mostly on formerly unknown sources and make a first attempt at answering the main questions regarding that era. In the dimensions of political thinking, *Rita Mária Kiss* examines the changes of the KDNP's identity strategy between 1989 and 1998, upon three milestones of the party's history: in the years of the party's refoundation, a decisive period regarding the formulation of the party's identity; at the time of the first Christian democratic congress in 1992; and in an era of fiercely competing identity narratives, i.e. during the internal crisis that evolved in the second parliamentary term. The paper reviews the key features of the party's communication in these periods. Research concerning the integration of the Christian Democratic People's Party into the respective large European party family would be filling a gap on its own, but in respect of this book it is one of the most important chapters. Upon the change of the political system in Hungary, the international network of connections built by emigrant Hungarian Christian democrats became immensely important and it facilitated the re-founded party's integration into Christian democratic organizations. The second study of *Éva Petrás* reviews that integration process after 1989, starting from the initial phase of viewing Western parties as examples to actual participation in the European Union's work. The chronology of political parties requires up-to-date knowledge of the history of the party concerned. *Róbert Szabó* undertook this undoubtedly difficult task that is nonetheless vitally important for further research. His work guides the reader through the KDNP's history from 1988 to 2010. When finalizing the chronology, we had to select the collected materials owing to scope limitations. The main selection criterion was to ensure that all key events of the KDNP's history and all key dates of its international connection network should be presented, along with the party's characteristic statements and stances.

When drafting the chapters herein, the *Christian Democratic Knowledge Base* research group was facing overly extensive technical literature sometimes, and scarce sources or even a complete lack of sources on other occasions. Where it was possible, we relied on the international and Hungarian technical literature of Christian democracy. The drafting of chapters discussing the party's history after the change of the political system and the preparation of the chronology, however, required fundamental research. The difficulties experienced in relation to that stemmed from a number of reasons. First, few authors have dealt with researching the Democratic People's Party (DNP) with an academic approach. The pioneering work of *Lajos Izsák* (the technical proof-reader of the Hungarian chapters) deserves highlighting. Due to the worsening political situation, the DNP's archives underwent scrapping regularly after the summer of 1948 and most of the remaining documents were lost or destroyed in 1949. With the establishment of the Historical Archives of State Security Services in Hungary, historical sources also became public among surveillance files and investigation documents regarding Democratic People's Party leaders and officials generated while they were prosecuted. The heritage of some members of the party elite ended up in archives, also serving as sources for our research group's efforts. In respect of the party's refoundation and early history, the heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács that is available for research is of immeasurable significance. From the heritage of Sándor Keresztes, only several tapes of

personal interviews are available in the Collection of Historical Interviews at this point. However, we had the opportunity to gain insight into certain documents that are still under sorting. We are sincerely grateful for this opportunity. The Collection of Historical Archives also contains an interview with László Varga that is another important source for researching the circumstances of the party's refoundation. In the initial period of the KDNP's existence, the collection and retention of documents was not organized professionally. The stack of documents from before 1998 that became available just recently is sporadic, too. Most party documents from after the re-launch of organized operations disappeared in 1997 when the party split. Yet even in this incomplete form, party documents could serve as a primary source for researching the KDNP's identity strategies and international relations. Although published with interruptions, the party's internal informative publications helped the compilation of the chronology, just like press materials found among party documents and research carried out using the press database of the Parliament's Library. We also made use of the interviews made by our research assistant, *Katalin Lukácsi* (with Zsolt Semjén, György Hölvényi, György Rubovszky, Mátyás Domokos, Tamás Lukács, Péter Juhász, Erzsébet Pusztai, Imre Kónya, Géza Jeszenszky and Asztrik Várszegi) and the two interviews made by *Éva Petrás* about the KDNP's international relations (with László Surján and György Hölvényi). Both set of interviews served as background material for this book. To present the KDNP's policy endeavours related to specific fields, we used a selection of parliamentary speeches and comments, draft amendments and individual MP legislative motions. In many cases, we resorted to the private archives of MPs to clarify the exact date of specific events.

Rita Mária Kiss

ÉVA PETRÁS

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN HUNGARY –FROM THE BEGINNING TO 1949

I

The diverse Christian democratic political parties and actors in European countries are connected by shared ideas and principles, their roots dating back to the early 19th century.¹ Parallel to the development of Christian democracy in Europe, Christian democratic political thinking also evolved in Hungary. As a political wing, Christian democracy gained ground in Europe after World War II. While in Western Europe, however, the efforts of Christian democratic parties after 1945 were aimed at creating a social market economy, and, regarding foreign politics, were driven by the idea of European unity, their sister parties in East-Central Europe, including Hungary's Democratic People's Party (Demokrata Néppárt – DNP), were striving to represent to their last breadth the universal principles of Christian democracy in the shadows of the national communist parties' fight for power. Since the key ideas of Christian democracy are actually the same everywhere, the general questions about the evolution and social influence of Christian democratic political thinking are valid for Hungary, too:

1. Is there a viable, Christian approach to politics that is more than just a manifestation of sustained insistence on rights deriving from historic tradition?

2. Is it possible to form a modern Christian worldview that offers more than merely a criticism of enlightenment from a religious standpoint and the open or concealed rejection of modern age intellectual development?²

The history of Hungarian Christian democracy shows that a positive answer to both questions is possible. This study explores history of Christian democratic thinking in Hungary by presenting the historic background and circumstances behind the evolution of this positive answer.

Walking in the footsteps of 19th century forerunners and following the Catholic teachings on social matters, Catholic thinkers and politicians in Hungary strove to elaborate a political concept at the beginning of the 1930s, an ideology they described as being “reform Catholic”³. Their concept was based on a realistic analysis of social circumstances of that era,

¹ See: Chapter “The Christian Democratic Political Family and the Values Its Represents” herein, and Niels Arbøl: *A kereszténydemokrácia Európában* [Christian Democracy in Europe]. István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 1995; Jenő Gergely: *A kereszténydemokrácia előtörténete és fogalma*. [The Background and Concept of Christian Democracy] In (Compiled and edit.) Jenő Gergely: *A kereszténydemokrácia Nyugat-Európában* [Christian Democracy in Western Europe], 1944–1958. Kossuth Publishing House, Budapest, 1980, pp. 11–93. See also László Csorba: *A magyar kereszténydemokrácia liberális katolikus öröksége* [The Liberal Catholic Heritage of Hungarian Christian Democracy]. Published in: István Barankovics Foundation: *Az élő hagyomány. Barankovics István és a magyarországi kereszténydemokrácia öröksége* [Living Tradition – The Heritage of István Barankovics and Hungarian Christian Democracy]. István Barankovics Foundation – Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 2007. pp. 10–19.

² Wolfgang Schluchter: *Rationalism, Religion and Denomination. A Weberian Perspective*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990. pp. 251–254.

³ József Takáts: *Modern magyar politikai eszméletörténet* [Modern History of Hungarian Political Ideas] Osiris Publishing House, Budapest, 2007. p. 110.

and it was meant to be the Hungarian equivalent of Western Europe's Christian democratic thought. This ideology became the political background for the political program and statements of Hungary's modern Christian democratic party that emerged after World War II, the Democratic People's Party.

II

In a speech delivered at an election rally in Győr on 10 August 1947, István Barankovics, general secretary of the Democratic People's Party said that the source of Christian democratic thinking in Hungary was the Christian socialist approach represented by Sándor Giesswein beginning around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. As Barankovics put it, "it is not by accident that [the Democratic] People's Party is launching its campaign in the city of Győr. At the turn of the century, it was in this city where the modern Christian social and democratic idea was proclaimed by a great priest, the first herald of evangelical socialism in Hungary, a world-renowned Hungarian ambassador of peace, founder of the first Christian workers' association, the tragic hero of social and democratic Christian politics: our great predecessor, Sándor Giesswein."⁴

Giesswein (1856–1923) was a papal prelate, a Christian socialist politician, a writer and the founder of the *Workers' Association of Győr and Győr Area*. He lived in an era when the social and political changes that emerged after the enlightenment and the French revolution changed the relationship between the individual and community, between society and the state throughout Europe, and this transformation inevitably affected the position of churches as well. Therefore, these changes spurred the Catholic high priests and thinkers of the era, also in Hungary and including Giesswein as well, to rethink the social presence of Christianity.⁵

Social teachings in papal encyclicals served as guidelines for modern Christian political thinking. Since the restart of encyclicals in modern times, i.e. since the release of Pope Benedict XIV's (1675–1758) first encyclical in 1740 to today, nearly three hundred papal encyclicals were issued. Through the educational function of the church, these encyclicals uniquely reflect political and social history, as they offer teachings about the most urgent issues of the actual era, worded by the high priests of the Catholic church.⁶ However, in the history of the Catholic church, it was the encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Pope Leo XIII's (1810–1903)⁷ in 1891 that brought about a turn after which the church began to outline its views on the optimal functioning of human society and economy in a broader context. In the late 19th

⁴ István Barankovics: Keresztény demokrácia. Mit akar a Demokrata Néppárt? [Christian Democracy. The Goals of the Democratic People's Party] In: (Edit.) Zoltán K. Kovács – Miklós Gyorgyevics: Híven önmagunkhoz. Barankovics István összegyűjtött írásai a kereszténydemokráciáról. [Being True to Ourselves. Compiled Writings of István Barankovics on Democracy.] Akadémia Foundation, Budapest, 2001. p. 331.

⁵ Jenő Gergely: Giesswein Sándor, a politikus. [Sándor Giesswein, the Politician] In *Demokrácia – kereszténység – humanizmus. Giesswein Sándor a modern kereszténydemokrácia közép-európai előfutára.* [Democracy – Christianity – Humanism. Sándor Giesswein, the Forerunner of Modern Christian Democracy in Central Europe.] István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 1994. pp. 29–41. and Erzsébet Szolnoky: Szociális igazságosság és keresztény szeretet. Giesswein Sándor a magyar keresztény szociális és kereszténydemokrata gondolkodás megalapozója. [Social Justice and Christian Charity. Sándor Giesswein, the Founder of Social and Christian Democratic Thinking in Hungary.] Éghajlat Publishing House, Budapest, 2003.

⁶ Michael J. Schuck: *That They Be One. The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals, 1740–1989.* Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C., 1991.

⁷ See text in: (Edit.) Miklós Tomka – János Goják: *Az egyház társadalmi tanítása.* [The Social Teaching of the Church] Szent István Társulat Publishing House, Budapest, 1993. pp. 27–55.

century, Leo XIII's starting point was the recognition that it is a vital and crucial interest of the Church worldwide to reach beyond the scope of religious life and to address issues raised by life in the modern times. The position of the Catholic church in the 19th century provided justification and motivation for church leaders to face the challenge of historic times. The general decline of religious life, the papal state's vanishing geopolitical significance, the "cultural war" ("Kulturkampf") unfolding in countries under liberal governments and the increasing secularization of societies put the church into jeopardy.⁸ The definition that seemed valid up to the modern age, namely that "the church is a mandatory religious community organized on a regional basis that fully overlaps with the political community or the state"⁹, proved to be less and less applicable from the early 19th century onwards.

Recognizing the challenge of the era, Pope Leo XIII employed a renewed theoretical toolset and the criticism of liberalism and Marxism to build a Catholic vision for the modern age. In this endeavour, he relied on the works of the forerunners of the Catholic thought on society, like e.g. bishops W. E. Ketteler¹⁰ (1811–1877) and G. Mermillod (1824–1892).¹¹ The Pope gave preference to neo-scholastic Thomism, the conceptual framework of which determined a theological language that seemed equally suitable for analyzing modern society and for elaborating on the renewed Catholic viewpoint. In *Rerum novarum*, the organic approach of society and the Catholic perception of natural law were supplemented with the sanctity of private property, the interdependence of capital and labour, and the obligation of all to serve the common good. In the terminology of Catholic societal teachings, the common good (*bonum commune*) is an organizing principle suitable to express the integration of the most diverse groups of society and their belonging to each other as long as employers and employees do their best in jointly promoting the common good in society and through the state.¹² By supporting the demands of workers and their interest representation efforts, *Rerum novarum* opened the door to the organization of Christian trade unions while setting standards to capitalist entrepreneurs through the code of business ethics. With this, Leo XIII also launched the Catholic renewal of the turn of the century. The two key areas of this rejuvenation were as follows: First, the assumption of political roles by Catholics in pressure groups and political organizations that were created along specific worldviews. Second, the religious rejuvenation that revived the values of Catholicism in secularized societies.

In Hungary, the *Rerum novarum* encyclical was received and interpreted in the 1890s, i.e. in an era of church political struggles between the Catholic church and the liberal state. Thus on the one hand it led to the birth of political Catholicism in Hungary, with the creation of first Hungarian Catholic party, the Catholic People's Party¹³ led by Nándor Zichy in 1894.

⁸ José Casanova: *Public Religions in the Modern World*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1994. pp. 11–39.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 40–66.

¹⁰ Diána Ibolya Fazekas: Friedrich Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler politikai és egyházpolitikai nézetei és tevékenysége az I. Vatikán Zsinat és a Kulturkampf alatt. [The Political and Church Policy Views of Friedrich Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler During the First Vatican Council and the Kulturkampf.] In *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* [Church History Review], 2012/3. pp. 50–74.

¹¹ Sándor Agócs: Philosophy by Decree. XIII. Leo and the Thomistic Revival. In: Same author: *The Troubled Origins of the Italian Catholic Labour Movement 1878–1914*. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1988. pp. 20–32.

¹² Gábor Gyáni: A társadalmi igazság történelmi fogalma. [The Historical Concept of Social Justice] In *See: Emlékezés, emlékezet és a történelem elbeszélése*. [Remembrance, Memories and Telling History] Napvilág Publishing House, Budapest, 2000. pp. 71–80.

¹³ *See: Csaba Csapodi: Gróf Zichy Nándor élete és politikája* [Life and Policies of Earl Nándor Zichy], 1828–1911. METEM [Publisher], Budapest, 1993.

On the other hand, however, it also led to the belated¹⁴ reception of social contents affirmed in *Rerum novarum* and to the anti-capitalist and anti-liberal interpretation thereof¹⁵. The so-called policy of “ralliement”, i.e. the Catholic church’s “shift” from feudalism and gradual joining to bourgeois development endeavours, a process that also entailed distancing from socialist ideas, only manifested in late 19th century in Hungary with the reduction that the Hungarian Catholic church did not only confront socialist ideas first and foremost, but also bourgeois development.¹⁶ Thus in the era of Austro-Hungarian Habsburg monarchy, the Catholic renaissance of the years preceding World War I started in a delayed manner, owing to social history reasons among others: Since social teachings were modelled after the social questions of principally industrial societies, in Hungary, where feudalism prevailed, these teachings gained social meaning only after the country was well into the founding years (the “*Gründerzeit*”) of capitalism. Against this economic and social backdrop, the first endeavours to organize parties and movements that offered a modern Catholic alternative in the spirit of *Rerum novarum* only emerged around the turn of the century. These endeavours mostly related to Sándor Giesswein.

In Hungary, the social scientific background for Catholic thinking on social and political issues evolved only much later, in the 1930s. This background rendered competitiveness to the Catholic alternative among political ideologies and enabled it to form its independent vision, albeit circumstances in Hungary and internationally changed substantially by then. In the formation of the Catholic alternative, a major role was played by renewing teachings, mostly by Pope Pius XI’s (1857–1939) encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931)¹⁷, and by the buoyant intellectual atmosphere of the 1930s in Hungary.¹⁸

Quadragesimo anno was released at a time characterized by the great depression, broken political stability of civil democracies and the formation of totalitarian dictatorships. In response to these developments, *Quadragesimo anno* presented the subsidiary principle as a universal approach regarding social structure. It is an operating principle that recognizes the existence and validity of competences at various levels of society and thus helps exploit the mutually supporting and counterbalancing responsibilities conveyed in these layers.¹⁹ “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice... to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do” wrote Pius XI.²⁰ In this encyclical, the pope considered the organizing principles of medieval guilds adaptable to the problems that arose in the early 20th century, outlining a social model where interest representation based on industries and professions would enable the peaceful cooperation of

¹⁴ Cf. Jenő Gergely: A keresztényszocializmus Magyarországon. [Christian Socialism in Hungary.] 1903–1923, Akadémiai Publishing House, Budapest, 1977. p. 62. and see: Katolikus hivatásrendi mozgalmak Magyarországon [Catholic Corporative Movements in Hungary 1935–1944.] In *Múltunk* (periodical), 1997/3. pp. 3–42.

¹⁵ Miklós Szabó: Az újkonzervativizmus és a jobboldali radikalizmus története 1867–1918. [The History of New Conservatism and Right-wing Radicalism 1867–1918] Új Mandátum Publishing House, Budapest, 2003. pp. 123–143.

¹⁶ Jenő Gergely: A keresztényszocializmus... [Christian Socialism...] Op. cit. pp. 12–13.

¹⁷ See text in: (Edit.) Miklós Tomka – János Goják: Op. cit. pp. 57–103.

¹⁸ Miklós Lackó: Szerep és mű. [Role and Work of Art] Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 1981. pp. 307–310.

¹⁹ János Goják: A szubszidiaritás a katolikus egyház társadalmi tanításában. [Subsidiarity in the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church] In (Edit.) Zoltán Hajdú: Szubszidiaritás és regionalitás az egyház- és államszervezetben. [Subsidiarity and Regionality in the Church and State Organization]. Centre for Regional Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Pécs, 2010. pp. 28–33. [source of English quote: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html]

²⁰ *Quadragesimo anno*: 79§. In: Miklós Tomka – János Goják: Op. cit. p. 81.

people of different social status for the sake of the common good. According to the offer outlined in the renewed Catholic teaching, employees and employers working in the same industries or professions should be united by corporations. These corporations should represent specific professions vertically, thus replacing the class structure of society. While these corporations would represent the interests of the underlying professions towards the state, the state would play a coordinating role, contributing to the existential and financial security of citizens through organizing economic policy and social policy in a top-to-bottom manner.²¹ In presumed ideal division of functions, the church intended to assume a moral integrator. However, the corporatism recommended in *Quadragesimo anno* did not prove to be an effective tool for social renewal anywhere in Europe. Governments were only interested in the concept of industries and professions to the extent that it considered it politically beneficial.²²

III

The renewed Catholic social teaching reached Hungary in the 1930s, landing in an environment where poverty and financial insecurity were not merely consequences of the great depression, but existed as centuries old structural problems that were mitigated only partially by the 19th century's great modernization wave.²³ Thus in Hungary social teaching and the social question entailed a different scope than in other European countries. Owing to the country's traditionally agrarian structure, the social question principally related to the problems of masses of peasants and not industrial workers. Then in the 1930s, social teaching inevitably covered the actual issues pertaining to the Catholic church's presence in society, and possibly any thinking of poverty deriving from the great depression. Even though this would have meant a re-thought form of Christian presence in society that would have called for the extension of the traditional charity activities of the church, there was much more to it. In Western Europe, the social question was primarily a 19th century issue²⁴. In Hungary between the two world wars, however, the term conveyed a much broader meaning, encompassing all thinking about the country's social development, modernization and democratization.

By the late 1930s, a widely supported consensus evolved among intellectuals regarding the need for reforming the Horthy regime.²⁵ Problematic areas were closely interrelated: the break-up of the country's quasi feudal social structure, the social and economic crisis of the newly evolving industrial society that was also impacted by international trends, and the actual problems of post-World War I Hungary deriving from the Trianon peace treaty all amounted to a complex set of problems that triggered considerable social dialogue. Just think

²¹ See: *Quadragesimo anno*: Sections 65, 83–85 and 117. In: Miklós Tomka – János Goják: Op. cit. pp. 78., 82–83. and 91.

²² Margit Balogh: A KALOT és a katolikus társadalompolitika, 1935–1946. [The KALOT and Catholic Social Policy, 1935–1946] Hungarian Academy of Sciences [HAS], Institute of History, Budapest, 1998. pp. 17–19; Mária Ormos: Politikai eszmék, politikai gyakorlatok a 20.–21. században. [Political Ideas and Practices in the 20th and 21st centuries] Napvilág Publishing House, Budapest, 2009. pp. 199–207.

²³ A.C. Janos: Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825–1945. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982. pp. 201–234.

²⁴ Zoltán Tóth: Elfelejtett előzmények. A régi társadalomtörténet sajátos kérdéseinek kialakulásáról. [Forgotten Background. About the Formation of Specific Questions in the Social History of Old Times] In Zsombor Bódy– József Ö. Kovács: Bevezetés a társadalomtörténetbe: hagyományok, irányzatok, módszerek. [An Introduction to Social History: Traditions, Approaches, Methods.] Osiris Publishing House, Budapest, 2006. p. 74.

²⁵ Miklós Lackó: Sziget és külvilág. Válogatott tanulmányok. [Island and Outer World. Selected studies.] HAS Institute of History, Budapest, 1996. pp. 167–169.

of the shocking recognition at the roots of the so-called popular movement: as Hungarian intellectuals turned towards the agrarian sector with hopes of renewing the country's identity, what they found instead was the unimaginable misery of Hungarian peasants.²⁶ Similarly, mention should be made of the Hungarian social-democratic movement's struggle for social justice and social security, an endeavour that was going on for more than half a century by then.²⁷

However, movements based on corporations of industries and professions were launched successfully in the 1930s, with KALOT, the Council of Catholic Agricultural Youth, being a primary example. These movements proved that the Catholic approach to organizing society was a successful contestant to mainstream ideologies of the era and the resulting organizations had a considerable base in society. Still, *Quadragesimo anno* did not only trigger the foundation of movements based on the order of industries and professions concept but also stimulated lay Catholic thinking in social sciences. A group of Catholic intellectuals realized at the time that the social teaching of the Catholic church included an overlooked attempt to respond to the social question, one that can be used for presenting the Catholic alternative as part of the intellectual efforts to develop a social analysis and a vision for the country's future. The stake of this recognition was far more than just an endeavour to expand the range of ideologies: Catholic intellectuals committed to reforms set out to none less an objective than to apply Catholic social teachings to Hungarian circumstances and thereby to elaborate a so-called "third way" that differs from both right and left wing criticisms of the regime.²⁸ In fact, what they realized through *Quadragesimo anno* was that traditional toolsets were insufficient to resolve social issues. For these intellectuals, the challenge was to find a way, if such a way exists at all, for shaping modern society in a manner that reflects Christian values.²⁹ Zoltán K. Kovács summarized the activities of this circle of intellectuals as follows: "...Against the anti-reformist behaviour of official church leaders, a social reform movement was unfolding. This movement was ready to embrace protestants and conveyed the possibility of profound social transformation. As a result of their work and lobbying pressure, several important social policy laws were enacted and the underlying movements began to evolve into political parties."³⁰ This Catholic intellectual reception of the *Quadragesimo anno* encyclical became the ideological forerunner of the social commitment appearing in Christian democratic concepts that emerged after World War II. Actually it also foreshadowed the Second Vatican Council.

The 1930s saw the launch of new Catholic periodicals³¹ that became forums for new, socially sensitive proto-Christian democratic approaches. *Korunk Szava* [Voice of Our Age]

²⁶ See: Gyula Borbándi: A magyar népi mozgalom: a harmadik reformnemzedék. [Popular Movement in Hungary: The Third Reform Generation.] Püski Publishing House, Budapest, 1989.

²⁷ Tibor Hajdu – Zsuzsa L. Nagy: A baloldali gondolat válsága Magyarországon a két világháború között. [The Crisis of the Leftist Thought in Hungary Between the Two World Wars.] In Valóság (periodical), 1985/9. pp. 78–94.

²⁸ The popularity of third way thinking in reform Catholic circles is evidenced by the fact that e.g. Wilhelm Röpke's book, "The Third Way (The Social Crisis of Our Time)" was translated into Hungarian by István Barankovics in 1943. Barankovics also wrote a foreword to the Hungarian edition. See foreword in: Zoltán K. Kovács – Miklós Gyorgyevics: Op. cit. pp. 89–91.

²⁹ Margit Balogh: A keresztényszociális mozgalmak az 1930-as években és a kereszténydemokrácia. [Christian Socialist Movements in the 1930s and Christian Democracy] In: Az élő hagyomány... [Living Tradition...] Op. cit. p. 91.

³⁰ Zoltán K. Kovács: A magyar katolikus egyház és a szociális kérdés. [The Hungarian Catholic Church and the Social Question] In: Az élő hagyomány... [Living Tradition...] Op. cit. p. 37.

³¹ *Korunk Szava* [Voice of our Age] (periodical 1931–1938), *Vigilia* [Vigil] (periodical from 1935) and *Új kor* [New Era] (periodical 1935–1937)

was founded by owner and editor-in-chief Earl György Széchenyi in 1931, specifically for promoting the reception of *Quadragesimo anno* in Hungary. His associates were future prominent figures of Catholic journalism like Borisz Balla, Zsolt Aradi, Jenő Katona, László Possonyi and György Rónay. This periodical regularly published the writings of outstanding Catholic scholars, like Vid Mihelics, Elemér Csávossy SJ³², Béla Kovrig and István Barankovics. Up to the division year of 1935, in addition to keeping up with major international and domestic Catholic developments, the publications gave extensive ground to the presentation of the social teaching and to explanations of the social vision and business ethics outlined therein, also addressing their adaptability in Hungary. In the beginning, the common mission for the writer panel of *Korunk Szava* was to find the connection points of theory and practice. They strove to achieve this by combining the analytical methods of social sciences and the fact finding methods of popular movement's sociography. Temporarily the two endeavours were interwoven, resulting in a new, buoyant, experimenting Catholic avant-garde tone that remained characteristic of the periodical between 1931 and 1935.

The adaption of the Pope's social teaching in Hungary began in the footsteps of bishop Ottokár Prohászka³³ in the 1930s. "A dismantled, disintegrated society. Lo and behold, that is the social question" so were quoted the words of Prohászka by the sociologist Béla Kovrig in the Prohászka memorial issue of *Korunk Szava*, in the autumn of 1932. For Catholic social thinkers in Hungary, Ottokár Prohászka (1858–1927) was always an ultimate reference point. Yet reference to his work in *Korunk Szava* enriched the Catholic social idea of the Székesfehérvár bishop with the requirement of sociographic realism. As for Kovrig, the first step of social reform was the realistic assessment of the situation, to be followed by social policy goal setting and the harmonization of these two. The social teaching outlined in *Quadragesimo anno* could serve as a basis for harmonizing reality and theoretical objectives as it showed the direction of surpassing the charity-based, old-fashioned social care approach. Later Kovrig devoted entire volumes to this pathfinding effort³⁴ and, to a certain extent, regarded his own career in social policy making as the implementation of this task³⁵.

Reference to Prohászka is nearly evident for a Catholic medium with a strong social commitment. What was a much greater novelty was the presentation of respected contemporary historian and thinker Gyula Szekfű as a role model.³⁶ It was Gyula Szekfű's Catholicism that made his interpretation of history embraceable by Catholic journalists who realized that the church's social teaching conveyed an opportunity for a conservative reform program.³⁷ Catholic writers who argued for reforms and approached the crises of their era from a Catholic viewpoint assumed that an intellectual communion exists between Szekfű and themselves, one that pointed out a unique feature of the evolving Catholic social thinking. They did not consider the crisis a Hungarian issue, but rather a universal, global problem of

³² Elemér Csávossy SJ: Az egyház szociális arca. [The Social Face of the Church] In *Korunk Szava*, 01.01.1932, pp. 7–8; 15.01.1932, pp. 5–6, 15.03.1932, pp. 5–6, 01.04.1932, pp. 5–6, 15.04.1932, p. 6 and Az új társadalmi rend [The New Social Order]: 15.05.1932, pp. 5–6, 01.06.1932, p. 6 and 01-15.07.1932, pp. 7–8.

³³ Béla Kovrig: Prohászka társadalom-szemlélete. [Prohászka's Views on Society] In *Korunk Szava*, 15.10.1932, pp. 11–13.

³⁴ Cf. Béla Kovrig: Szociálpolitika. [Social Policy] Magyar Szemle Társ. [Hungarian Review Society] Budapest, 1936.

³⁵ Éva Petrás: Kovrig Béla élete és pályája. [Béla Kovrig's Life and Career] In Béla Kovrig: Magyar társadalompolitika, 1920-1945. [Hungarian Social Policy, 1910-1945] Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 2011. pp. 317–336.

³⁶ Earl György Széchenyi: Szekfű Gyula védelmében. [Defending Gyula Szekfű] In *Korunk Szava*, 01.12.1931, p. 3.

³⁷ Pál Hatos: Szekfű katolicizmusa. [Szekfű's Catholicism] In *Múltunk*, 2010/1. pp. 232–257.

the era. Szekfű's book *Három nemzedék* [Three Generations], then its 1934 revised edition and the addition of a conservative reform program to it had a huge influence on the pathfinding endeavours of intellectuals around *Korunk Szava*. Szekfű believed that the crisis of his era stemmed from “past sins”, thereby offering an adaptable interpretation model for Catholics seeking their political and church identity.³⁸ Thus owing the interpretation model adapted from Szekfű, new Catholic periodicals turned their attention to the history of the Hungarian Catholic church instead of that of Hungary. While in Szekfű's approach problems of the agrarian society, those of different religious denominations, the Jewish question and capitalism, along with the problem of generations and the cause of Hungarians living in neighbouring countries were all perceived as dividing lines to be overcome in post-World War I Hungary³⁹, young Catholics applied the same method to analyzing the history of the church from the same viewpoint and urged reform within the church.⁴⁰

It is remarkable that Szekfű described Hungarian society in the Horthy era as “neo-baroque”, using the word in a disparaging sense. However, for Hungarian Catholic journalists of the era who urged reforms, “neo-baroque” became an adjective describing the necessary paradigm change in church history. This is probably best illustrated by the spiritual pathfinding efforts of the journal *Vigilia*. In the church history era that began with Leo XIII, the church's self-interpretation could no longer be described with the “shepherd and flock” metaphor⁴¹. Instead, owing to the powerful influence of Saint Thomas Aquinas, topics like the rational explanation of the world, natural law and man's moral freedom came to the fore. The ecclesiology of the era traced back the depiction of the church as Christ's mystical body to Christian medieval times, bypassing baroque traditions. This approach that overarched historic eras and highlighted the middle age, the Gothic style, scholastic philosophy and late medieval mysticism became an example for the avant-garde of young Hungarian Catholics, who followed the model of France's *Renouveau catholique* movement and contrasted it with the Hungarian church environment of their own age that they regarded as being “neo-baroque”. The tone, thematic structure and value considerations of *Vigilia*, a periodical promoting Christian personalism differed considerably from the Catholic press of the time. This difference is best illustrated by the stylistic distinction between the respective Catholic identities. In *Vigilia*, the concept of “Catholic” is used in a universal sense, referring to Catholicism as an integrating force that takes in secular culture and arts instead of rejecting them, interpreting them appreciatively along its own criteria. László Possonyi, György Rónay and Sándor Sík explored these new routes of the Catholic milieu in their essays.⁴²

³⁸ Péter Strausz: Korporáció vagy hivatásrend? Az érdekképviseleti rendszer átalakításának kérdése Európában és Magyarországon, 1926–1940. [Corporation or vocational group? The Issues of Transforming the System of Trade Unions in Europe and Hungary, 1926–1940] In *Múltunk*, 2010/1, pp. 83–122.

³⁹ Gyula Szekfű: Három nemzedék és ami utána következik. [Three Generations and What Comes After Them.] Egyetemi Ny. [University Press], Budapest, 1934. pp. 416–465.

⁴⁰ Imre Vida: A mai magyar katolikus ifjúság feladatai (küzdelem a korszerűtlen társadalom ellen). [Tasks of Today's Hungarian Catholic Youth (Struggle Against an Outdated Society)] In *Vigilia*, 1936/4. pp. 11–48; Zsolt Aradi: Amiről dönteni kell. [What We Need to Decide on] In *Új kor*, 1935.05.04.; Zsolt Aradi: Vita a lényegről. [Debate About the Heart of the Matter] In *Korunk Szava*, 15.02.1935, pp. 65–66.

⁴¹ About the categorization of papal encyclicals on social matters and the explanation of the key metaphors illustrating the related church visions, see: Michael J. Schuck: Op. cit. pp. 1–45.

⁴² E.g. in a conversation with Ferenc Pergel, György Rónay described *Vigilia*'s approach to literature as follows: “They intended to destroy the misbelief that Catholic literature means writings that are pious and praying. No. Catholic literature is writings that make literature, and do it in a way that they are Christian in spirit.” In György Rónay: *Interjúk, nyilatkozatok, vallomások*. [Interviews, Statements, Confessions] Vigilia Publishing House, Budapest, 2004. p. 166.

In social sciences, Vid Mihelics and Béla Kovrig completed a similar journey. Being a sociologist, Mihelics (1899–1968) was one of the very first promoters of *Quadragesimo anno* in Hungary. He regarded the renewed social teaching as tool that could enable more effective social presence [for the church] compared to the various forms of Catholic trade unions.⁴³ In his writings, he used social justice and the ancient Christian principle of brotherly love as starting points, applying a natural law approach to get to corporative ideas that he considered the peak of organic concepts in understanding society. In his book *World Problems and Catholicism* he wrote:

*“While liberalism only takes into consideration the isolated individual and Marxism only takes into consideration man as a cell with equal rights and with a designated place within the organization of society, why could not we have a solution that satisfies the needs of human existence but also enables the expression of individuality? Well, we Catholics believe and are convinced that the social teaching of Christianity, with its history of nearly two thousand years, provides just this third way solution by integrating the benefits of individualism and socialism without incorporating their drawbacks. Like at so many turning points in history, Christ’s church is stepping forward again to save mankind from spiritual and cultural collapse.”*⁴⁴

In this work Mihelics came to the conclusion that the reason of all social problems is the loss of true faith and understanding⁴⁵. He was convinced that if man could regain these virtues (which he described as the “splendid return”), social problems would cease to exist.⁴⁶

As a social politician, Béla Kovrig (1900–1962) was directly involved in social policymaking. Beginning in 1927, as an associate at the Ministry of Welfare and Labour, he worked on the cause of social insurance. Then as deputy director of the National Social Welfare Institute (Hungarian acronym: OTI) he participated in the elaboration of the act on elderly and disability insurance that was later enacted by the National Assembly as Act XII of 1938.⁴⁷ In 1938, prime minister Béla Imrédy asked him to lead a newly formed department of the Prime Minister’s Office called Social Policy Department.⁴⁸ During the term of Pál Teleki’s government, Kovrig was appointed to lead the National Policy Service. As a confidant of Pál Teleki, he played a role in the elaboration of Teleki’s “corporative constitution reform plan”.⁴⁹ However, Kovrig was not only a social politician but a scholar as well. Being a prolific and talented author, his writings were published regularly from the 1920s on. Many of his works were groundbreaking in several ways and included titles like “*Labour Protection in Danube States*” in which he applied a comparative approach, and a theoretical overview titled “*Social*

⁴³ Vid Mihelics: *A szakszervezkedés elmélete és iránya*. [Theory and Direction of Organizing Trade Unions.] Dunántúli Egyetemi Ny. [Transdanubian University Press], Pécs, 1928. pp. 172–176.

⁴⁴ Vid Mihelics: *Világproblémák és katolicizmus*. [World Problems and Catholicism] Révai Publishing House, Budapest, 1933. p. 8.

⁴⁵ Vid Mihelics: *Modern katolikus fejek*. [Modern Catholic Heads] Szent István Társulat Publishing House, Budapest, 1937. p. 7.

⁴⁶ Éva Petrás: “Splendid Return.” *The Intellectual Reception of the Catholic Social Doctrine in Hungary, 1931–1944*. WJLF, Budapest, 2011.

⁴⁷ Act 12 of 1938 on the Mandatory Pension Insurance of Business Employees”. Full text of the law is available in 1000 év törvényei. [Laws of 1000 Years] In: www.complex.hu/1000.

⁴⁸ Péter Hámori: *Kísérlet egy „propagandaminisztérium” létrehozására Magyarországon. A Miniszterelnökség V., Társadalompolitikai Osztályának története 1938–1941*. [Attempt to Establish a Propaganda Ministry in Hungary. The Story of Department 5, Social Policy, of the Prime Minister’s Office] In *Századok*, 1997/2. pp. 353–380.

⁴⁹ Pál Teleki: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek*. [Selected Political Writings and Speeches] (Edit.) Balázs Ablonczy. Osiris Publishing House, Budapest, 2000. pp. 443–463.

Policy” along with several additional volumes, periodical articles and a multitude of studies.⁵⁰ Still, *Social policy in Hungary* was Kovrig’s main work that not only provided a summary explanation to and analysis of the social policy approach and legislation of the Horthy era, but also elaborates a social programme for the Hungarian Christian democratic movement after WWII.⁵¹

István Barankovics (1906–1974), however, was critical of the relationship between the Hungarian Catholic Church and society from the very beginning. As early as in 1932, the future leader of the Democratic People’s Party already pointed out the necessity of land reform and land redistribution in an article. Barankovics stated that the elimination of disproportions of owned landed property in Hungary was the sole way to ensure social peace and the nation’s sustained existence.⁵² He believed that land redistribution would inevitably take place, either with or without the consent of the Catholic church, itself a large estate holder.

“As the Catholic church lost a major part of its power owing to the temporary and harmful alliance with the ruling classes, [...] the same way the church will lose its moral and spiritual influence unless it supports the enforcement of human rights in the broadest possible sense, along with social-oriented thinking”⁵³ – he wrote, concluding that “In the history of Hungarian land, not only the history of the nation is written but also the fate of the Catholic church.”⁵⁴

Monitoring the domestic and international public activities of the Catholic church finally spurred *Korunk Szava* to take a political stand in response to the political developments of the 1930s. As far-right views were gaining ground both internationally and in Hungary, the authors of the periodical felt urged to clarify the relationship between Catholic social teaching and right-wing social organization endeavours. They formed a very clear picture of the incompatibility of National Socialism and Christianity very soon. E.g. they organized a public discussion about Hitlerism already in 1932. Editors requested prominent public figures representing opposite views to outline their stands.⁵⁵ It was more difficult, however, to develop an opinion on fascism. In an effort to overcome the political crisis in the wake of the great depression and the economic consolidation in 1920s’ Hungary, it was then prime minister Gyula Gömbös who strove to replace parliamentary democracy gradually with state-controlled corporations, following Austrian and Italian examples.⁵⁶ The *National Work Plan*⁵⁷, issued at the beginning of his first government’s term, set the goal of creating a nation state as an end in itself, to be implemented through the dedicated work of various social classes under

⁵⁰ Other key volumes by Béla Kovrig: *Az új Oroszország: 1917–1926*. [The New Russia: 1917-1926] Budapest, 1926.; *Az antiszociális áradattal szemben*. [Against the Anti-Social Wave] Budapest, 1930.; *A magyar szociálpolitika igaza a liberális és szocialista eszmerendszerek küzdelmében*. [The Verity of Hungary’s Social Policy in the Struggle of Liberal and Socialist Ideas] Budapest, 1932.; *Fasizmus – hitlerizmus: új államfelfogások – társadalmi szemlélet és politika*. [Fascism, Hitlerism: New Approaches to State, Society and Politics] Szeged, 1934.; *Korfordulón* [At the Turn of Eras]. Budapest, 1940.

⁵¹ Béla Kovrig: *Magyar társadalmpolitika, 1920–1945*. [Hungarian Social Policy] Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 2011.

⁵² István Barankovics: *Új földbirok-reform felé*. [Towards a New Land Reform] In *Korunk Szava*, 01.08.1932. pp. 1–15, 15–19.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁵⁵ In addition to István Milotay és Tibor Eckhardt, Anna Kéthly also provided writings to *Korunk Szava*. Out of notable Catholic social scholars who also did so, Vid Mihelics and Gyula Szekfű deserve mention. In *Korunk Szava*, 01.06.1932. pp. 7–11.

⁵⁶ József Vonyó: *Gömbös Gyula és a jobboldali radikalizmus*. [Gyula Gömbös and right-wing radicalism] Pécs, 2001. pp. 52–65.

⁵⁷ *National Work Plan of the Gömbös government*. In: (Edit.) Ferenc Glatz – Ferenc Pölöskei: *Magyarországi Pártprogramok 1919–1944*. [Programmes of Hungarian Political Parties 1919-1944] Budapest, 1991. pp. 330–344.

central direction. Especially at the time of forming his second government, i.e. in 1935, Gömbös paid special attention to initiatives that were believed to be able to expand his popular base as well: thus he made an attempt to win the support of so-called popular movement writers⁵⁸, but the reform Catholic endeavours inspired by *Quadragesimo anno* also caught his attention. Therefore, he and his policies played a decisive role in dividing Catholic social scholars, in particular those around *Korunk Szava* and the then launched *Vigilia* periodical, in interpreting the Catholic corporative approach, as the analogy between the Catholic corporations' and fascist corporations' theory failed to highlight the fundamental differences between the two for some time.⁵⁹

Therefore, the rise of the corporate interpretation of the church's social teaching was followed by increase of doubts about it, showing significant correlation with changes in Hungarian domestic politics at the time. After the editors of *Új Kor* [*New Age*] left the medium, Széchenyi, editor-in-chief of *Korunk Szava* increasingly sought to fight against right extremist ideologies. However, Széchenyi passed away in 1938. Using Széchenyi's death as pretence, the Imrédy government revoked the publication license of the increasingly critical *Korunk Szava*. The periodical could only be re-launched in 1939 under the name *Jelenkor*, after successful lobbying by several MPs. The editor, however, was Jenő Katona already. Another ideological successor of *Korunk Szava* was the *Ország Útja*⁶⁰ periodical, edited by István Barankovics. Still, with World War II fast approaching, special significance was conveyed by the distancing from corporative ideologies that first took shape in *Korunk Szava* and in the writings of Catholic social science thinkers around it.

At the end of World War II, the major academic writings of Vid Mihelics and Béla Kovrig reflected the same direction.⁶¹ In an essay titled *Hungarian social politics* [*A magyar társadalompolitika*], Kovrig wrote:

*“Based on the long-term observation of social policies implemented in diverse power structures and their impact on the people, we are convinced that parliamentary democracy is the only political system that enables a true social policy (one that is unbiased towards the interests of specific groups) that serves the inner unity and balance of a modern, industrial society.”*⁶²

In principle, Hungarian Catholic thinkers gradually distanced themselves from corporativism, which was an intellectual accomplishment on their own right. However, it took place parallel to the Vatican's gradual change of direction, reflected by such papal manifestations⁶³ as “*Mit brennender Sorge*”, issued against Nazism in 1937 and “*Divini*

⁵⁸ Miklós Lackó: *Sziget és külvilág*. [Island and Outer World] Op. cit. pp. 136–150.

⁵⁹ About the relationship of Gömbös and the Catholic Church see: Norbert Spannenberger and József Vonyó: *Felekezeti béke és társadalomszervezés* (Társadalomszervezési kísérletek és a katolikus egyház a Gömbös-érában). [Denominational Peace and Social Organization (Social Organization Attempt and the Catholic Church in the Gömbös Era)] In (Edit.) István Horváth and András Kikindai: *Emlékkötet Zichy Gyula tiszteletére*. [Memorial Book in Honour of Gyula Zichy] Budapest–Pécs 2007. pp. 135–164.

⁶⁰ *Az Ország Útja* [The Way of the Country] (periodical 1937–1943)

⁶¹ See: Vid Mihelics: *Katolikus tanítás a tulajdonjogról*. [Catholic Teaching on Ownership] Budapest, 1946. and Béla Kovrig: *Magyar társadalompolitika* [Hungarian Social Policy] Op. cit.

⁶² Béla Kovrig: *Magyar társadalompolitika* [Hungarian Social Policy] Op. cit. p. 30.

⁶³ Máté Gárdonyi: *Bevezetés a katolikus egyház történetébe*. [Introduction to the History of the Catholic Church] Jel Publishing House, Budapest, 2006. pp. 334–337.

Redemptoris Mater”, taking a stand against communism in the same year. With these encyclicals, the church gave up, on a global basis, the promotion of corporative theories and found an ally in parliamentary democracy in its ideological fight against communist and national socialist totalitarian state concepts.⁶⁴

Thus in the 1940s, Hungarian Catholic social thinking was mature enough to not only call for a social program in a broad sense but also to urge democratic political changes.⁶⁵ Separation from corporative ideologies and the recognition of interdependencies of social rights and political democracy were crucial steps that laid the foundation for a Christian democratic political program and political party after the world war.⁶⁶

Scrutinizing the Catholic political ideologies of the interwar era, historian Mária Ormos rightfully pointed out that those ideologies can be regarded as the antecedents of Christian democracy although: „...the Christian approach almost got lost in the multitude of political trends and endeavours at the time, and no dominant party or movement took shape that could have been effective in the political scene.”⁶⁷ Indeed, among the various political trends, István Barankovics and his followers were not particularly influential but their influence was getting stronger, especially from the summer of 1943 when the Catholic Social People’s Movement was established. Catholic thinking about social issues in the 1930s and 1940s and the social policy efforts of its representatives finally led to the recognition that served as an integral program element of the Democratic People’s Party⁶⁸ after World War II. It was the Hungarian equivalent of the key European Christian democratic thought of the era that combined social market economy and parliamentary democracy, and thereby striving to achieve the political recognition of social rights, a long overdue step in Europe’s history.⁶⁹

IV

In the wake of World War II, several political formations fell out of the political sphere in Western Europe while Christian democracy became a political trend of decisive importance. Its rise was helped by a number of factors: In two Catholic countries, France and Italy, the key factor was that Christian democratic parties participated in anti-fascist resistance and firmly embarked on the path of democracy. During the German occupation of France, Catholic philosopher and thinker Jacques Maritain joined de Gaulle’s resistance movement and laid down the theoretical foundation that irrevocably tied Christian political thinking to democracy.⁷⁰ His stand had a powerful influence on Catholic political endeavours everywhere and played a key role in making Christian democratic parties join the anti-Nazism and anti-

⁶⁴ József Takáts: Op. cit. p. 110.

⁶⁵ Jenő Gergely: A Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt előtörténete. [The Background of the Christian Democratic Party] In Műhely, 1984/3. pp. 3–21 and Margit Balogh: A keresztényszociális mozgalmak az 1930-as években és a kereszténydemokrácia. [Christian Socialist Movements in the 1930s and Christian Democracy] Op. cit. pp. 87–125.

⁶⁶ Lajos Izsák: Pártok és politikusok Magyarországon 1944–1994. [Political Parties and Politicians in Hungary 1944–1994] Napvilág Publishing House, Budapest, 2010. pp. 98–105.

⁶⁷ Mária Ormos: Op. cit. p. 205.

⁶⁸ István Barankovics: Keresztény demokrácia. Mit akar a Demokrata Néppárt? [Christian Democracy. The Goals of the Democratic People’s Party] In (Edit.) Zoltán K. Kovács – Miklós Gyorgyevics: Op. cit. pp. 313–331.

⁶⁹ Gábor Gyáni: A társadalmi igazság történelmi fogalma [The Historical Concept of Social Justice] Op. cit. p. 76.

⁷⁰ Jacques Maritain: Christianisme et démocratie. [s.l.] 1943. and see: Humanism intégral. [s.l.], 1936.

fascist movements. Participation in anti-fascist resistance helped the Christian democratic movement secure an important role for itself in post-war European politics.

Like with its sister parties in Europe, one reason of the Democratic People's Party in Hungary after 1945 was its "political innocence". While traditional Christian parties lost their credibility owing to their policies in the interwar era, those launched after World War II, i.e. the Christian Democratic Party, and later the Democratic People's Party distanced themselves from that past.⁷¹ In a status assessment written for the Hungarian Bishop's Council, titled *pro memoria* and dated 26 May 1945, István Barankovics outlined that "the changes in domestic and international politics that took place since the beginning of the year are so profound that they pose a brand new challenge to the Hungarian Catholic church as well. The church must give up illusions that the past may return [...]. Life will not get back to its former course. Instead, it will take a new, lasting shape." Regarding the need for a new Catholic party, he argued as follows: "The protection of Catholic interests indisputably calls for a party that is active, bears democratic credibility, free of all past burdens and offers a nationwide political program. A party that can employ the full range of modern political weaponry to protect the material, social and political prerequisites of the successful fulfilment of the Church's spiritual mission, i.e. to protect the interests of faithful masses, too."⁷²

At the free elections in the wake of World War II, European Christian Democratic Parties achieved results that raised them among the most significant political powers, making their leaders decisive figures of European rebuilding and cooperation. Such key personalities were Alcide De Gasperi in Italy, Georges Bidault and Robert Schuman in France and Konrad Adenauer in Germany.⁷³ The European success of Christian democratic parties originated in part in certain inherent advantages: one such advantage was the political vacuum after the war, with right wing and far-right parties having disappeared. Albeit Christian parties could not be considered outright right-wing entities because they were part of left-wing coalitions e.g. in France and Italy up to 1948, and they were the only political force that could be expected to forestall the leftist, mostly communist advancement. Thus they could also reach out to segments of society who lost their former party and were looking for new orientation points. Therefore, from 1948 on, in many countries mostly Christian democratic parties took the place of the political right wing and finally became the alternating political party against the leftist socialist or social-democratic and liberal alternatives.⁷⁴

In Hungary, a similar Christian democratic boom was not possible. After 1845, the changes in domestic policy foreshadowed that the Hungarian Communist Party would employ all means to grasp power as soon as possible. Historians are still to agree regarding the political nature of the so-called coalition period between 1945 and 1948. Here we only cite a

⁷¹ This was guaranteed by the participation of the Catholic Social People's Movement, in fact the party's predecessor organization, in the anti-fascist resistance. About this topic see: László T. László: Adatok a magyarországi katolikus ellenállás történetéhez I. A Katolikus Szociális Népmozgalom megalakulás és célkitűzései. [Data About the History of Catholic Resistance in Hungary 1. The Formation and Objectives of the Catholic Social People's Movement.] In *Katolikus Szemle* [Catholic Review] (Rome), 1978/1.

⁷² *Pro memoria*, 26 May 1945. In: György Szokolczai – Róbert Szabó: Két kísérlet a proletárdiktatúra elhárítására; Barankovics és a DNP 1945–1949; Bibó és a DNP 1956. [Two Attempts to Prevent the Proletarian Dictatorship; Barankovics and the DNP 1945–1949; Bibó and the DNP 1956.] Budapest, Gondolat Publishing House, 2011. pp. 203–217.

⁷³ Mária Ormos: *Op. cit.* pp. 246–253.

⁷⁴ Mária Ormos: *Op. cit.* pp. 199–204.

theory that highlights the complexity of the issue, only to provide a historical context to the topics discussed herein: “Between 1945 and 1948, behind-the-scenes pre-Stalinisation was already underway *amidst* a public political democratization process and not merely *under its disguise*”.⁷⁵

Ultimately, the political developments in Hungary during those years (also affected by international events that fuelled the cold war) led to the takeover of power by the communists.⁷⁶ It was this very political situation in which the Democratic People’s Party (DNP) had to prove the need for a new Catholic party and gain acceptance of it.

With István Barankovics at the helm, however, the DNP had a leader who also had lasting accomplishments in political theory as well: the DNP’s programme statements in 1945 and 1947 are true reflections of his personal views, too, and thus may serve as orientation points in assessing the ideological structure of Hungary’s Christian democratic movement.⁷⁷ In a programme announcement speech delivered on 25 September 1945⁷⁸, Barankovics argued that his party was able to stand on its own feet in the contest of political parties:

“Now should the political weight and need conveyed by the ideals and faithful masses of Christianity be excluded from factors that shape public life for good? Or should everyone still take into account the fact that the political demands dormant in the ideals, faithful masses and unique culture of Christianity will be voiced as political intentions in democratic public life? Those who answer this with “No” [...], logically reject even the thought of a People’s Party. [...] Those, however, who do take into account the fact that the ideals, unique culture and faithful masses of Hungarian Christianity convey a political need that demands a place for itself in the contest of political parties and in shaping public life, those, who do not close their eyes to the immense religious needs that revive in the wake of great sufferings; those who recognize the thousand-year old roots of Hungarian Christianity, the roots that could not be ripped out from the soul of the people in one take; those who take into account the undeniable global solidarity of Christian churches; and those who are open to take note of the increasingly respected political standing and role of Christianity even in countries that used to be neutral to it, will regard it as one of the key interests of the young Hungarian democracy to have Christian organizations of faithful masses that are genuinely interested in establishing and sustaining democracy and protect it fervently against any attack.”⁷⁹

Thus Barankovics was aware of European trends and perceived their presence in Hungary, too, and argued for the existing need for the DNP on that basis. The rest of his 1945 programme speech took a firm stand supporting parliamentary democracy and fundamental human rights. He consistently assessed the social, political and economic events after 1945 with the measure of natural law: he supported the establishment of a new type of economic

⁷⁵ György Gyarmati: A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956. [The Rákosi era. A Decade of Regime-Changing Turns in Hungary, 1945–1956.] ÁBTL [Historical Archives of State Security Services in Hungary] – Rubicon, Budapest, 2011. p. 24.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 460.

⁷⁷ Miklós Gyorgyevics: Barankovics István, a magyar kereszténydemokrácia apostola. Pályakép. [István Barankovics, Apostle of Hungarian Christian Democracy. A Career Overview] In: (Edit.) Zoltán K. Kovács – Miklós Gyorgyevics: Op. cit. pp. 474–507.

⁷⁸ István Barankovics: Programbeszéd a Demokrata Néppárt 1945. évi szeptember hó 25-i értekezletén. [Programme Speech at the Democratic People Party’s Meeting on 25 September 1945] In (Edit.) Zoltán K. Kovács – Miklós Gyorgyevics: Op. cit. pp. 293–311.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 294.

and social order, he agreed with land reform, with the nationalization of strategic industries and agricultural estates, with transforming public administration and with the need for a special relationship with the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

The cornerstone of the programme speech (harmonizing with Barankovics' qualifications in law) was the Christian ideal state. In Barankovics' interpretation, the state does not exist for its own purpose. Instead, it is an institution with a humane attitude, with its key role being to serve people's lives through implementing public good. The programme announced in Győr on 10 August 1947 rested on similar foundations: in addition to emphasizing the Christian ideal state and Hungary's independence, it also outlined extensively the Christian democratic principles pertaining to the economy and social policy.⁸¹ Later Barankovics also presented his views on the Christian ideal state in the *Hazánk* [Our Homeland] journal, launched to serve as the daily of the Democratic People's Party.⁸² As for Barankovics, the "Christian ideal state ...is implemented where the state sees its ultimate mission in serving the human personality that possesses the divine privilege of freedom; where public good is the state's guiding star and where all life-related actions of the state are governed and regulated by the law of justice."⁸³

However, Hungary was drifting further and further away from this ideal: the circumstances of the 1947 parliamentary elections, the exclusion of parties competing with the communist party from the elections, the criminalization of public life and finally the so-called "blue slip" election fraud were all part of the communist party's strategy to seize power. Although the elections brought on the greatest success of Hungarian Christian democracy as the DNP ended up at the second place with more than 820,000 "clean" votes, the communist party only allowed the Christian democratic fraction into the parliament temporarily, regarding them as a political force tolerated with a view to political reasons. Therefore, the DNP's parliamentary activities after the elections were actually rearguard actions in the name of parliamentarism.⁸⁴

Parallel to the struggles at Parliament, Barankovics and his party still made attempts in 1948 to fight an ideological battle with the workers' parties that were united by then. Barankovics described the need for that fight in *Hazánk* as follows:

"The Democratic People's Party is an ideological party [...] Some simply identify the party's Christian worldview with the formerly distorted, false forms thereof that are far from the essence of Christianity; Some others would expect the DNP, a party standing firmly on the foundation of the Christian worldview, to serve and represent desires and needs that are fully incompatible with that worldview, that are not only unrelated to evangelical socialism but are

⁸⁰ Róbert Szabó: A modern kereszténydemokrácia megjelenése Magyarországon. [The Beginnings of Modern Christian Democracy in Hungary] In (Edit.) István Pálffy: 70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt. [The Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary] István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 2014. p. 27.

⁸¹ István Barankovics: Keresztény demokrácia. Mit akar a Demokrata Néppárt? [Christian Democracy. The Goals of the Democratic People's Party] In (Edit.) Kovács K. Zoltán – Miklós Gyorgyevics: Op. cit. pp. 313–331.

⁸² István Barankovics: Arcsál a keresztény állameszme felé. [Towards a Christian Ideal State] In *Hazánk*, 17 August 1947. pp. 1–2.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 1.

⁸⁴ Gábor Tabajdi: Kereszténydemokraták a politikai rendőrség célkeresztjében. [Christian Democrats in the Political Police's Crosshair] In (Edit.) Krisztián Ungváry: Búvópatakok. A jobboldal és az állambiztonság 1945–1989. [Underground Currents. The Political Right-wing and State Security, 1945–1989.] 1956 Institute – Jaffa Publishing House, Budapest, 2013. p. 190.

outright contrary to it. We must state firmly that all those people are gravely wrong.”⁸⁵ In the autumn of 1948, the party established the so-called Worldview Academia where lectures were held by such names as Barankovics, Vid Mihelics, György Rónay and other top intellectuals of the party.

Still, the course of events could not be changed: after the turnaround year of 1948, not only the political representation of Christian democracy was in danger, but also the personal existence of its representatives. As the communist regime was being established, the theoretical and practical representation of Christian democracy in Hungary became annihilated for decades to come.

⁸⁵ In *Hazánk*, 9 July 1948.

RÓBERT SZABÓ

A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ENDEAVOUR IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE: THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S PARTY (1944–1949)

I. Background

In October 1918, an opportunity emerged in Hungary for the first time ever to have Christian policymaking be determined by Christian socialist principles and to become an independent political force. The Trianon peace treaty transformed the mindset of Hungary's political elite, who now believed that the traditional ways and institutions of religiousness should be supported in all areas of public life. They strove to establish close ties with historic Christian churches, building a relationship based on mutual interests. However, as a consequence, once the Christian parties founded after 1919 became governing parties, they gave up their original programmes that had shown a solid social character. Thus they either became part of the regime or were established as anti-reform, conservative parties that preserved the traditional, neo-baroque thought and approach to society.⁸⁶ After the economic crisis unfolded in 1931, the Christian party proved to be unable to answer the challenge posed by fascism. They had two paths to choose from: to let a conservative-legitimist Catholic movement unfold, or to articulate a modern Christian democratic alternative, for the first time ever during the Horthy regime.⁸⁷

The mass Hungarian Catholic reform movement was the fruit of the organizing efforts inspired by Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* issued in 1931. In Hungary, out of the Catholic corporative organizations, the one closest to Christian Democracy was the Council of Catholic Agraricultural Youth (KALOT), an organization founded in 1935 and led by Jesuits. KALOT was launched in the Southern Hungarian town of Szeged, its first two leaders were Jenő Kerkai⁸⁸ and Töhötöm Nagy⁸⁹, assisted by significant lay aids György Farkas⁹⁰ and József Ugrin⁹¹. KALOT's core objective was to organize, on the basis of religious ethic principles, the agrarian population and farming youth that were still immune to extremist (communist and fascist) ideologies and were considered the nation's main sustaining force, to help their

⁸⁶ Gábor Erdődy: A magyarországi kereszténydemokrácia gyökerei és alternatívái.

[The Roots and Alternatives of Christian Democracy in Hungary] Downloaded on 14 June 2015. Source: http://www.antalljosef.hu/hu/a_magyarorszag_i_keresztenydemokracia_gyokerei_es_alternativai

⁸⁷ Félbemaradt reformkor. Miért akadt el az ország keresztény humanista megújulása? A Katolikus Szemlében megjelent tanulmányok gyűjteménye. [Reform Era Unfinished. Why Hungary's Christian Humanist Renewal Came to a Halt? Collection of studies published in the Katolikus Szemle / Catholic Review] Detti, Roma, 1990.

⁸⁸ Jenő Kerkai (1904–1970): a Jesuit, founder and leader of KALOT, the Council of Catholic Agraricultural Youth.

⁸⁹ Töhötöm Nagy (1908–1979): a Jesuit, one of the founders, organizers and vice president of KALOT. Later freemasonic public writer.

⁹⁰ György Farkas (1908–1991): a senior associate of KALOT, director of KALOT's education center called "people's college". From 1945, representative of FKgP (Independent Smallholders', Agrarian Workers' and Bourgeois' Party), from 1947, representative of the DNP in the National Assembly.

⁹¹ József Ugrin (1910–1993): a founding associate and later chief secretary of KALOT. Representative of the DNP in the National Assembly in 1947–1948.

professional, cultural and political education, and to build their self-awareness. As part of elite education among agrarian youth, they addressed the most acute social problems and firmly stood by the need for land reform. KALOT's programme envisaged a society model that was based on professions, an approach not unusual in Europe at the time.⁹² The forerunners of the intellectual elite of the Democratic People's Party (Demokrata Néppárt – DNP) were the Christian socialist movements and democratic political organizations that enabled the party's broad public influence after 1945. Reform Catholicism was one such movement, represented by young, progressive Catholic intellectuals (with István Barankovics among them)⁹³ whose thinking and approach were based on a combination of Hungarian and European values, Catholicism and social justice. Advocates of social Catholicism, leaders of Catholic social movements (KALOT, EMSZO [Egyházközségi Munkásszakosztályok], Hivatásszervezet [Professional Organization] and other youth organizations) also belonged here, just like representatives of political democracy, some of whom belonged to legitimists while others were members of the Christian democratic group of the Independent Smallholders' Party. Ultimately this latter fraction officially joined the Democratic People's Party in 1946–1947. Even though the ideas of Christian democracy, promoting democratic parliamentary reforms might have influenced Catholic public life to some extent, the press remained the public forum of the Christian democratic thought and program that also manifested in the isolated work of specific intellectuals in a concealed manner. The intellectual group concerned and the leaders of mass movements began to build closer ties only in late 1944. After 1945, these movements were the key source of supporters and voters for the Hungarian Christian democratic political party.⁹⁴

II. The first prunes of modern Hungarian Christian democracy

Progressive Catholics decided to take action when the outcome of World War II became clear. In 1943, they handed over a memorandum to Cardinal and Prince Primate Jusztinián Serédi.⁹⁵ The memorandum pointed out that if Catholicism intends to remain an important actor in public life after the war, it must split with the political regime and with the Christian party (called United Christian Party from 1937 to 1943 and Christian People's Party in 1943–1944) that became compromised as its supporter. Further, it underscored that Catholicism must get rid of its privileges of feudalistic origin and take the stage in the changed new world by elaborating a modern welfare programme. The head of the Catholic church supported the proposal. On 26 August 1943, diocesan bishop Vilmos Apor⁹⁶ hosted convening Catholic public leaders in Győr. At the convention, the tone was mostly set by the leaders of the KALOT, mostly Jenő Kerkai. The event was also attended by József Pálffy⁹⁷ and István

⁹² Margit Balogh: A KALOT és a katolikus társadalompolitika 1935–1946. [The KALOT and Catholic Social Policy] HAS Institute of History, Budapest, 1998. pp. 17–19.

⁹³ István Barankovics (1906–1974): journalist, editor-in-chief of *Ország Útja*, later *Magyar Nemzet* (1943–1944). Member of the Executive Committee of the Christian Democratic People's Party from 1944. The party's leader from the spring of 1945 until his emigration, officially in the capacity of the DNP's general secretary. MP from September 1947 up to February 1949.

⁹⁴ Jenő Gergely: A kereszténydemokrácia Magyarországon. [Christian Democracy in Hungary.] *Múltunk*, 2007/ 3. p.128. (hereinafter Gergely 2007)

⁹⁵ Jusztinián Serédi (1884–1945): a Benedictine monk, church lawyer, Archbishop of Esztergom from 1927 to his passing.

⁹⁶ Vilmos Apor (1892–1945): Ordained in 1915. Diocesan bishop in Győr from 1941, high priest supporter of the modern Catholic thought. He was shot dead by Soviet troops in 1945 while he was protecting attacked women. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1997.

⁹⁷ József Pálffy (1904–1988): landholder, Christian party MP from 1939. Representative of KDNP in the Hungarian Front, then party chairman.

Barankovics, who rather emphasized the democratic and neoliberal nature of Christian politics. The 23 participants intended to form a new, modern, social and democratic Christian party.⁹⁸ Bishop Apor agreed, but the majority of the bishops insisted on retaining ties with the old Christian party that became insignificant by then. As a compromise, the convention established the Catholic Social People's Movement (Katolikus Szociális Népmozgalom – KSZN), led or rather sponsored by Apor and chaired by the sociologist Béla Kovrig,⁹⁹ president of the University of Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca, Romania). Kovrig was assigned to prepare a programme for the movement (actually a proto-party), addressing the post-war situation and containing modern Christian democratic principles.¹⁰⁰ Programme drafting was completed by May 1944. Consisting of three volumes and titled *Hungarian Social Policy [Magyar társadalompolitika]*, the programme applied the Catholic social teaching to Hungarian conditions, outlining timely answers to the challenges of a modern industrial society. In addition, it also outlined the framework for a new, post-war Christian social order.¹⁰¹ The draft was also endorsed by Prime Primate Serédi, and the Bishops' Council gave their preliminary consent to it as well at their 14 May 1944 session.

III. The Christian Democratic People's Party

The Hungarian Front (Magyar Front) was established in May 1944 with the purpose of preparing Hungary's exit from World War II. Besides illegally operating social democratic, communist, smallholders, bourgeois politicians and legitimists, participants of the front also included the representatives of anti-fascist Christian organizations. The organization functioned as the leading political organ of the national anti-fascist resistance. On assignment from the Board of Directors of the Catholic Social People's Movement, József Pálffy became a member. Owing to his family ties (Győr bishop Vilmos Apor was his cousin) and loyalty to the church, the Bishops' Council had confidence in him. As the Russian troops were approaching Hungary, the Hungarian Front was already focusing on the change of power after the ceasefire, and thus decided on setting up a formal coalition of political parties. Pálffy could only remain in an anti-fascist organization's board of directors as the leader of a Catholic party. This exigency served as a catalyst to the immediate formation of a Catholic party that was planned on for long. With a view to circumstances, the head of the Catholic church gave his approval of the foundation of the Christian Democratic People's Party (Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt - KDNP) on 11 October 1944, and of the collaboration of

⁹⁸ István Elmer: A Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt, majd Demokrata Néppárt története (1944–1949). [History of the Christian Democratic People's Party, then Democratic People's Party (1944–1949)] In: *Az idő élén jártak. Kereszténydemokrácia Magyarországon 1944–1949.* [They Were Almost Ahead of Their Time. Christian Democracy in Hungary 1944–1949] Edit. Zoltán K. Kovács – Pál Rosdy. István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 1996. p. 97. (hereinafter Elmer, 1996) A similar plan already took shape within the KALOT. See diary of Töhötöm Nagy. (National Széchenyi Library. Manuscript archives, Holding 216, Box 4. Diary entry on 27 February 1945)

⁹⁹ Béla Kovrig (1900–1962): a sociologist, social politician and university professor. Elaborator of social insurance laws in the 1920's, later an expert working for the DNP.

¹⁰⁰ László T. László: *Egyház és állam Magyarországon 1919–1945.* [Church and State in Hungary 1919–1945] Szent István Társulat Publishing House, Budapest, 2005. pp. 260–261. (Hereinafter: László, 2005). Also confirmed by Károly Szemkő: *Kovrig Béla feljegyzései a II. világháború alatti ellenálló tevékenységéről.* [Béla Kovrig's notes of his resistance activities during World War II.] *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok* [Hungarian Church History Sketches], 2008/ 3–4. pp. 99–102.

¹⁰¹ László 2005, pp. 261–266.

Catholics and communists in the front. This also meant that the former Christian party lost the reason for existence.¹⁰²

The exact date of when the Christian Democratic People's Party was established is still subject to debate. The most likely date is 13 October 1944.¹⁰³ The exact number of participants is still unknown, but the leaders, including József Pálffy, László Varga S. J.¹⁰⁴ and many of the Catholic corporate organizations were in attendance. The KDNP, the mass base of which were supposed to be supplied by KALOT organizations, were directed by secular leaders only. The elected chairman was József Pálffy. The intellectual leader, who chose to remain in the background though, was the Jesuit father Kerkai, who retained his position as leader of the People's Movement. At the founding session, Kovrig said that Gyula Szekfű¹⁰⁵ joined in principle, and József Közi-Horváth,¹⁰⁶ representative of the United Christian Party also announced his support. István Barankovics, who was in hiding at the time in a Franciscan monastery in the Pasarét part of Budapest, was invited to and attended the convention and was elected by unanimous vote into the new party's executive committee. The background of this was Pálffy's experience gained in the Hungarian Front: he knew that Barankovics was the person who would be accepted by the coalition political parties, as his progressive Catholic views would be regarded as a guarantee of cooperation by those who condemned the former kind of Christian policymaking.¹⁰⁷ As Hungary's attempt to exit World War II failed, the new party's activities were reduced to the bare minimum, practically to theoretical preparations and secret gatherings. The foundation of KDNP in itself did not mean that the new party was fully recognized and regarded as an equal political power in the post-war era. KALOT leaders who managed to avoid imprisonment were also aware of this: at the end of 1944 they strove to gain recognition for the new Catholic reform movement and the new party from influential figures of the Soviet army and the new democratic Hungarian government. Töhötöm Nagy obtained permission from Soviet military authorities in Miskolc to re-launch KALOT. In mid-December 1944, Kerkai met prime minister Béla Miklós, defence minister János Vörös and Géza Teleki, minister for religious and educational matters, to legitimize KDNP. The ministers assured him of their support, Miklós even helped party organization with a written permit. It was not simple to gain permission for the party's legitimate operation, since KDNP's leaders could not be present at the founding convention of the Hungarian National Independence Front (Magyar Nemzeti Függetlenségi Front - MNFF) on 2 December 1944, and thus the parties participating therein did not regard KDNP as being one of the democratic Hungarian political parties. Getting legal recognition for the KDNP and achieving freedom for party organization was a multi-stage process. Other political parties considered that the

¹⁰² Gergely, 2007. p. 141.

¹⁰³ This date is communicated by László, 2005, p. 274., referring to Kovrig's unreleased manuscript (Christian Democratic and Social Reform Movements in Hungary, 1961.). It is repeated by Zoltán K. Kovács: A Demokrata Néppárt alapítása [Foundation of the Democratic People's Party]. In: Félbemaradt reformkor... i.m. [Reform Era Unfinished... op.cit.] Detti, Roma, 1990, p. 163. and also Elmer, 1996, pp. 99. However, Töhötöm Nagy's diary entry mentions 14 October. (National Széchenyi Library. Manuscript Archives, Holding 216, box 4. Diary entry of 22 October 1944.) László Varga: Kérem a vádlott felmentését! [Please Acquit the Defendant!] Püski, New York, 1981. pp. 41–43. (hereinafter: Varga, 1981) mentions 30 November 1944 as the date of the party's foundation. According to Lajos Izsák: Polgári pártok és programjaik Magyarországon 1944–1956 [Civic Parties and Their Programmes in Hungary 1944–1956]. Baranya County Library, Pécs, 1994. p. 40 (hereinafter: Izsák, 1994), the foundation date was in late October 1944.

¹⁰⁴ László Varga S.J. (1901–1974): a Jesuit, one of the organizers of the National Vocational Organization of Hungarian Workers.

¹⁰⁵ Gyula Szekfű (1883–1955): a historian and academic. His writings served as the ideological foundation of the Horthy era. After Hungary was invaded by the Germans, he was forced to hide owing to his anti-German views. Szekfű supported the foundation of the KDNP.

¹⁰⁶ József Közi-Horváth (1903–1988): pastor, MP (1939–1945). Secretary of Actio Catholica (1935–1939). In 1944, he protested in the House of Representatives against Hungary's German occupation. He condemned the mass deportation of Jews.

¹⁰⁷ László, 2005. p. 274.

prime minister went beyond his capacities when he issued a written permission. In particular, the Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt - MKP) questioned the democratic nature of KDNP, tendentiously confounding them with Károly Wolff's right-wing Christian Base Party. KDNP were also subject to attacks and accusations as communists wrongly considered Catholic mass movements reactionary and clerical, and believed that their supporters have the same ideological stand as their leaders and activists. Further, these movements were also burdened by their historic association with the misinterpreted concept of Catholic corporations. Thus leftist parties only regarded Barankovics and his fellow intellectuals as true Christian democrats who could break away from the former ways of Catholic policymaking (that included even József Pálffy). However, Barankovics and his circles did not have any mass support and lacked experience with movements.¹⁰⁸ Although after 6 February 1945, László Varga¹⁰⁹ received a temporary operating licence for the KDNP, but its validity was restricted to Budapest and the surrounding areas. The release of a countrywide permission was further delayed. It seemed that the stand announced at the sessions of the Budapest National Committee and the Interim National Government, both held on 18 April 1945, completely hinders the KDNP's operation, as representatives of the Hungarian National Independence Front announced upon the annulment of the prime minister's permit that they would not extend the number of participating parties by involving a Christian/Catholic party.¹¹⁰

The official launch of KDNP took place in Szeged on 21 January 1945. Yet party organization efforts started in Debrecen and Eger were probably restrained by the uncertainties around licensing the party. Published by József Ugrin, the party programme named Christian faith in God as the ideological basis, adding that respect for human dignity is a natural consequence of such a faith. This was in line both with the natural law teachings of Christian democratic philosophy that is centred around the respect for the human personality and with the integral humanism of Jacques Maritain. This worldview also set the basis for a set of resulting principles: respect of work and worker, protection of private property, safeguard the sanctity of family life, love of one's home and the serving the country. Specific demands harmonized with the objectives of Christian democratic parties participating in Western European governments at the time, adapted to specific Hungarian circumstances. The party committed itself to political democracy (civil freedoms, the freedoms of association, assembly, speech and press; right to vote in general, equal and secret elections; personal and property security). KDNP opposed both dictatorial, autocratic and "extreme liberal" ways of exercising power. In order to implement economic democracy, the party called for a land reform and promised a fair living and wages that enable self-realization of the human personality. They believed that the system of local governments and autonomies in general must be established and strengthened in public administration and professional interest representation (chambers) alike, as this is a prerequisite of democracy.¹¹¹ Of those forming the KDNP

¹⁰⁸ Gergely, 2007. p. 142.

¹⁰⁹ László Varga (1910–2003): lawyer, writer. In 1945, he served as prosecutor of the DNP. In 1947–1948, he was MP for the Democratic People's Party. From 1994 to his passing in 2003, he served again as an MP, as vice-chairman then chairman of the KDNP (2002–2003).

¹¹⁰ Lajos Izsák: *A Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt és a Demokrata Néppárt, 1944–1949*. [The Christian Democratic Party and the Democratic People's Party, 1944–1949]. Kossuth Publishing House, Budapest, 1985, p. 29. (hereinafter: Izsák, 1985).

¹¹¹ Programme published by Izsák, 1994, pp. 223–225.

executive board upon the party's formation on 27 February 1945, honorary chairman Gyula Szekfű never participated actively in the party's life. Pálffy remained national chairman, István Barankovics became general secretary and a nine-member board was established.¹¹² After and despite the rejecting resolution of the Interim National Assembly's Political Committee, KDNP continued organization work under the name of DNP. This time, however, their efforts were based on Barankovics's programme that called for social democracy in domestic policy, market economy in economic policy and Finnish-type neutrality in foreign policy.

IV. KDNP renamed Democratic People's Party

KDNP entered the political stage in a politically favourable situation, since former (right-wing) Christian parties lost credibility owing to their policies between the two world wars. Although leftist parties considered KDNP as competitors and thus hindered its political emancipation, occupation forces counted on the launch of a new Christian party in January 1945 already, after the siege of Budapest. Therefore, their representative contacted István Barankovics and intended to gain influence over the new party's press by promising to give back the daily newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* to him.¹¹³

The KDNP's organizational growth was hindered by surreptitious conflicts within the party. Opinions differed in political and strategic questions and these differences existed from the very moment of the party's foundation. Once the circumstances around the party became consolidated, these differences became amplified. Pálffy and his close supporters wished to operate KDNP based on assumed legal continuity with the Christian parties of the Horthy-era. Critics of the aristocrat party chairman regarded him as a representative of the old-fashioned Christian policymaking that was no longer considered valid. Barankovics and his allies wished to implement parliamentary democracy that is based on Christianity. They considered KDNP as a denominational party, one that operates on the basis of natural law and does not perceive itself as the successor of any former Christian party; a party that works in the spirit of Christian mentality, but is not following direct guidance of the Bishops' Council in representing the political interests of Catholics. This approach was also expressed by the change of the party's name following the party executive board's meeting on 27 April 1945. The name KDNP was shortened to Democratic People's Party (Demokrata Néppárt – DNP). While the name change did not affect the party's Christian democratic engagement, it expressed its independence from religion and from taking hands-on directions from the church hierarchy. (This move probably took them the furthest away from dependence on the official church compared to all previous Catholic parties.) With the name change, Barankovics and his followers not only wished to clearly distance the new party from former Christian parties but they also wanted to symbolize the party's ecumenical nature (despite all efforts, the latter objective was only partially fulfilled throughout the party's life). Both sides expected a

¹¹² Izsák, 1985. p. 23.

¹¹³ Archivio Generale dell' Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 3) 1949–1963.

clear decision from top Catholic leaders to resolve the differences of opinion within the party. The decision was delayed until the inauguration of the new Prince Primate of Esztergom, even though the majority of bishops supported Pálffy. Several attempts were made to restore unity within party leadership. First, a three-member executive committee was set up to lead DNP (comprising József Ugrin, István Barankovics and József Pálffy), but the chairman ignored it, as he enjoyed the support of the Bishops' Council and of Prince Primate Mindszenty.¹¹⁴ In May 1945, the executive committee removed Pálffy from his position by majority vote and elected Barankovics to lead the party as a general secretary. The position of chairman remained vacant.¹¹⁵ On 19 August 1945, Pálffy responded with excluding his opponents from the party and vindicated his right to elect the DNP's new leaders on 6 September 1945.¹¹⁶ This was an obvious and final split of the Christian party. Pálffy was supported the leaders of dissolved Christian organizations and former Christian party politicians, who were former Christian socialists at best but mostly compromised political figures. Barankovics enjoyed the support of KALOT, the Jesuits and local parish priests. Both Christian parties intended to participate in the 1945 parliamentary elections but neither received open, official support from the church. The National Committee that licensed parties to participate in the general elections passed a resolution on 17 September 1945, favouring Barankovics since the delegates of democratic parties considered his Christian democratic program more acceptable than the Catholicism of the Pálffy group who were clearly committed to the church. At the party staff meeting held on 25 September 1945, the party-directing chairman delivered a programme speech, outlining the DNP's democratic programme and naming the enforcement of natural law as the key objective of the aforementioned programme. He drew a clear demarcation line between the Christian parties of the pre-1945 era and DNP. In addition to endorsing papal social encyclicals and fundamental human rights (general and secret voting rights, personal freedom, freedom of speech, assembly and religion), Barankovics also took a stand by Western-style parliamentary democracy, the right of expression and organization, and by a "genuine local government system". He said that the new type of economic and social order is feasible if implementation is based on natural law, the moral rules of the gospels and the guidance of papal social encyclicals. He declared that the party supports private property ("our motto is not that nobody should have property, but that everybody should have property"), but the right of private property should be limited by the enforcement of common good. He supported democratic land reform, nationalization of strategic industries and plants, transforming public administration, the need for a special relationship with the Soviet Union and even establishing a republic in Hungary. The party accepted the need for separating the state and the church, on the principle of "free church in a free state", but strongly demanded full operational freedom for the church and the utmost enforcement of religious freedom. They also rendered importance to establishing good ties with neighbouring countries, taking into consideration the significant Hungarian minorities living there.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Esztergom Primate Archives, M. 3. László Varga's letter to József Mindszenty dated 6 September 1945. József Mindszenty (1892–1975): Hungary's last cardinal prince primate. Parish priest in Zalaegerszeg (1919–1944), Bishop of Veszprém (1944–1945) then Archbishop of Esztergom (1945–1973). Communist authorities arrested him in late 1948 and gave him a life sentence in a show trial in 1949. From 1956 to 1971, he lived in the US embassy building in Budapest.

¹¹⁵ Varga, 1981. pp. 55–56.

¹¹⁶ Esztergom Primate Archives, M. 3. József Pálffy's letter to József Mindszenty, dated 26 August 1945. Izsák, 1985, pp. 44–45.

¹¹⁷ Programme published by Izsák, 1994, pp. 225–238.

Finally DNP could not participate in the elections. There was no sufficient time for preparation and the lack of party press was a significant drawback (*Hazánk* was first published on 18 October 1945). Its nationwide organization suffered a delay and the government hindered the opening of party offices in the countryside.¹¹⁸ It must have been a decisive moment when they realized that it would make more sense to support the Smallholders' Party (Független Kisgazdapárt - FKgP) than participating in the elections independently because FKgP's policy also focused on Christian and national values, thus an alliance of civil political parties could be created.¹¹⁹ Thanks to the agreement with Béla Varga, chairman of the FKgP's Budapest organization, the representatives of the parties received two mandates each. Sándor Eckhardt¹²⁰ and László Varga were elected from FKgP's Budapest list on 7 October 1945 and represented DNP since that date. Sándor Bálint¹²¹ announced on 6 December 1945 that he would support DNP, thus from then on he represented the party in the parliament. Since they formed only a tiny group in the parliament, DNP representatives had few opportunities to speak in front of the national assembly. In the parliamentary debate of the draft legislation on the republic on 30-31 January 1946, Eckhardt, the fraction leader said that monarchy and republic are equally acceptable political systems for the supporters of the Christian state idea. However, owing to the importance of the decision, he proposed that a referendum should be held on the matter.¹²² In the National Assembly [i.e. Hungary's Parliament], regarding matters pertaining to the freedom of religion and the church's teaching role, the Democratic People's Party was supported by 17 Smallholders' Party representatives who had participated in EMSZO, KALOT and other Catholic corporative movements earlier.¹²³ In 1946, DNP mostly remained silent, as they were focusing on the internal matters of party building. The DNP's party constitution was elaborated in late 1945 and early 1946. Béla Kovrig played an important role in drafting. The most important questions were discussed with Vid Mihelics,¹²⁴ István Barankovics, Sándor Eckhardt and László Varga, but the executive committee was not convened. The party constitution was completed by late January 1946 but it was not published in written form. One general provision declared that: "The goal of the Democratic People's Party is to gain victory for the Christian concept of the ideal state in the form of a democratic government. The Party shall fight for enforcing natural law, moral of the gospels and social justice in Hungarian public life. Our ideal is the independent country of free Hungarians."¹²⁵ The constitution rested on the same basis as most party constitutions at the time. A trial period for admitting new members was a novelty though, just like the employment of a "worldview advisor", assigned to "promote proper orientation regarding questions pertaining to the gospel and to the natural law-based worldview." This selected individual was entitled to attend, with a consulting mandate, the National Meeting of Representatives and the Executive

¹¹⁸ Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 3) 1949–1963.

¹¹⁹ Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 3) 1949–1963. In 1954, Barankovics described the DNP's role as a standby for the smallholders' party in case a licensed party would be needed after the split of the FKgP.

¹²⁰ Sándor Eckhardt (1890–1969): linguist, litterateur and university professor. MP for the FKgP and for the DNP from 1945 and 1947, respectively.

¹²¹ Sándor Bálint (1904–1980): ethnographer and university professor. MP for the FKgP and for the DNP from 1945 and 1947, respectively.

¹²² Register of the National Assembly convened in Budapest on 29 November 1945. Volume 1, pp. 286–291.

¹²³ Kovács K. Zoltán: A Demokrata Néppárt belépése a magyar közéletbe. [The Democratic People's Party Entering the Public Scene.] In: Félbemaradt reformkor... i.m. [Why Hungary's Christian Humanist Renewal Came to a Halt... op.cit.] pp. 178–179.

¹²⁴ Vid Béla Mihelics (1899–1968): university and college teacher, journalist, editor. MP for the DNP from 1947.

¹²⁵ Izsák, 1994. pp. 51–52. Published by Lajos Izsák – Róbert Szabó: A Demokrata Néppárt alapvető dokumentumai 1946–1947 [The Core Documents of the Democratic People's Party 1946–1947]. In *Múltunk*, 1991/1, pp. 139–146.

Committee sessions, the former of which enjoyed a very important role and broad decision-making rights. (DNP leaders primarily thought of appointing Jesuit university professor József Jánosi¹²⁶ as consultant, since his views were close to the party's Christian democratic approach. As a compromise, they would have accepted Budafok parish priest Lajos Mezgár¹²⁷, who was regarded as a confidant of Székesfehérvár bishop Lajos Shvoy, a supporter of Prince Primate Mindszenty's policies¹²⁸.) Regulations for the operation of local governments and administrative units were outlined in the Organizational Procedures, drafted in the summer of 1947.¹²⁹ The general elections in 1945 and the appearance of DNP representatives in public politics did not mitigate the tension between the party and the leader of the Bishops' Council. Mindszenty continued to be distrustful towards the activities of Barankovics's Christian-spirited party. He refused to support them saying that "they have committed themselves to Moscow".¹³⁰ He did not like their compromise opinions applied to sustain a *modus vivendi* and he disapproved of the adoption of principles from Jacques Maritain's new French Catholic movement in the DNP's policies. In the summer of 1946, DNP leaders sent out a confidential memorandum signed by István Barankovics, Sándor Eckhardt and Sándor Bálint to all bishops except for the Prince Primate, presenting their policy and outlining the essence of Christian democracy as they represented it. Dated 16 July 1946, the document reviewed the past and present of Christian policymaking in Hungary, outlined its international dependencies and responded to criticism that mostly came from Esztergom [the Prince Primate's seat]. The policies of the Christian democratic party was only considered realistic with a view to fundamental and final facts (the agreement of Yalta, the presence of Soviet forces in Hungary, the increasingly strong power position of the leftist parties, the proclamation of the republic, the nationalization wave, etc.). In an international context, the document that is likely to have been worded by Barankovics, was modelled after French Christian democracy and Robert Schumann's party. The document also took a stand regarding the everlasting dilemma, the relationship between the church and Christian democracy: to what extent can the church interfere with the operation of a Christian democratic party? DNP leaders were of the opinion that modern Christian democracy is not possible without treating faithful supporters as adults. In this conflict, the Bishops' Council unanimously supported the Prince Primate. Still, their would-be relationship to Christian democrats remained an open question.¹³¹

A Christian democratic party in the legislation

The FKgP's majority in parliament decreased by the summer of 1947 owing to the communist party's (MKP) administrative moves, political pressure and the actions of communist political police. Citing the significant shift of powers in parliament as the reason,

¹²⁶ József Jánosi (1898–1965): a Jesuit philosopher, professor of logic and metaphysics at a Budapest university. Chairman of the Hungarian Saint Cross Association. Emigrated to Austria in 1949.

¹²⁷ Lajos Mezgár (1891–1970): parish priest in Székesfehérvár and Budafok, honorary provost. Organizer and supporter of Catholic reform movements. Emigrated in 1949, served in Brazil from 1951.

¹²⁸ Lajos Shvoy (1879–1968): priest (1901), diocesan bishop of Székesfehérvár from 1927 until his passing.

¹²⁹ Izsák, 1994. pp. 51–52. Published in Lajos Izsák – Róbert Szabó: A Demokrata Néppárt alapvető dokumentumai 1946–1947 [The Core Documents of the Democratic People's Party 1946–1947]. In *Múltunk*, 1991/1, pp. 146–166.

¹³⁰ Esztergom Primate Archives 3063/1946

¹³¹ Jenő Gergely: A Demokrata Néppárt „igazoló jelentése” a Mindszenty József bíboros hercegprímással keletkezett konfliktusáról. [“Justification Report” by the Democratic People's Party on Their Conflict with Prince Primate József Mindszenty]. In *Századok*, 1993/ 5–6, pp. 761–780.

MKP enforced early elections by getting a new election bill passed on 23 July 1947. Amidst the new circumstances, masses of disappointed smallholders faced two choices: either to vote for the Hungarian Independence Party that offered a national, civil programme, or to support the Christian political force, the Democratic People's Party. The religious, mostly Catholic smallholders of Hungary's westernmost region had a history of supporting Christian democratic principles. Their joining provided strong support to the Democratic People's Party right before the elections. The establishment of DNP organizations among them began in the spring of 1947 already. That is when the three components of the Christian Democratic Party first fell in place: The group of intellectuals led by Barankovics, the peasants and employees who were educated in dissolved Catholic corporative mass movements, and the Christian democratic wing of the Smallholders' Party.¹³² Their collaboration was spontaneously strengthened by the anti-church and anti-religious actions ignited by communists in the election campaign. Further, these actions also motivated the majority of bishops and countryside parish priests to support the Democratic People's Party. The new election rights' act significantly restricted the number of eligible voters compared to 1945, depriving mostly opposition party supporters of their voting rights. With the free interpretation of categories specified in the law, local election committees committed serious encroachments and severely broke the law. Hundreds of thousands of voters were deprived of their rights.¹³³ With the introduction of the bonus system, the law gave preference to coalition parties upon the distribution of votes to national lists and thus mandates. Participation in the elections was not an obvious decision for the Democratic People's Party, either. They were definitely entitled to participate, but the party had to decide whether it was advantageous for them to participate in elections that were subject to restrictions. How would that influence their already tense relationship to the clergy, and most of all to Mindszenty, during and after the elections, with a view to the results thereof?

This time again, the party failed to win support from József Mindszenty. Negotiations with the Prince Primate's representatives hit a dead end, since the preconditions they set for officially supporting the party were such that would have meant giving up independence and fully adapting the political views of clerics – conditions that were obviously unacceptable for a party with Christian worldview.¹³⁴ After the rejection, the Bishops' Council did not name any single party that it would clearly support. In their internal directives and guidance to the faithful developed with a view to local conditions, they named the DNP as number three in the ranking of parties worthy of support.¹³⁵ However, despite Mindszenty's objection, a majority resolution was passed at said meeting, leaving it to diocesan bishops to decide which

¹³² Jenő Gergely: A Demokrata Néppárt alkotó elemei. [The Components of the Democratic People's Party]. In: Kereszténység és közélet. Tiszteletadás Zoltán K. Kovács 75. születésnapjára. (Tanulmányok). [Christianity and Public Life. Tribute to Zoltán K. Kovács's 75th Birthday. (Studies)] Edit: Gábor Bagdy, Miklós Gyorgyevics and József Mészáros. István Barankovics Academy, Budapest, 1999, pp. 165–173.

¹³³ László Hubai: A magyar társadalom politikai tagoltsága és az 1947-es választás. [The Political Fragmentation of the Hungarian Society and the 1947 Elections] In: (Edit.) István Feitl, Lajos Izsák and Gábor Székely: Fordulat a világban és Magyarországon 1947–1949 [A Turnaround in the World and in Hungary 1947–1949]. Napvilág Publishing House, Budapest, 2000, p. 100 (hereinafter: Hubai, 2000).

¹³⁴ Izsák, 1985. p. 94.. Document published in György Szokolczai – Róbert Szabó: Két kísérlet a proletárdiktatúra elhárítására. Barankovics és a DNP 1945–1949. Bibó és a DNP 1956. [Two Attempts to Prevent the Proletarian Dictatorship; Barankovics and the DNP 1945–1949; Bibó and the DNP 1956.] Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 2011. pp. 286–288.

As Barankovics disclosed in a contemporary writing, at his meeting with Mindszenty, he only asked Esztergom for amicable tolerance only, but not support. Cf. Archivio Generale delle Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 2) 1945–1949.

¹³⁵ History and Minutes of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Council meetings, 1945–1948. Redaction, editing and introductory studies by Margit Beke. Argumentum Publishing House, Köln–Budapest, 1996. Agenda item 2, 25 July 1947, p. 220.

party they would support in their diocese. Leaders of the Democratic People's Party decided on participating in the elections when several bishops contacted them personally and assured them of their support.¹³⁶

The official campaign launch of the Democratic People's Party took place on 10 August 1947. The location was Győr, chosen purposely in memory of the Christian socialist efforts of Sándor Giesswein, a proclaimed political predecessor of DNP. Barankovics's speech started out from the fact that the Democratic People's Party is a denominational party, and that the Christian ideal of the state is in the centre of their worldview. He did not place his political party on the political map as a church party, but rather as a political party committed to provide political representation to "every faithful person".¹³⁷ DNP set the objective of implementing Hungarian Christian democracy, where "genuine local governments of the people" are functioning, where executive and legislative powers respect natural law and divine laws. In order to implement democracy based on freedom and equality in Hungary, the party demanded that the focus of state activities shall be returned to legislation; so that the elected autonomy of villages, cities and counties can actually be put to work; they urged local government elections be held, after having been delayed for long; they called for democracy in public administration; for the establishment of the court of constitution and for adapting a law on the protection of personal freedom. Further, the party called for the separation of the state and the church and urged the restoration of diplomatic ties with the Holy See. It stood up for the freedom of churches to establish schools and set the curricula for them, for the compensation of churches for confiscated goods (except for landed property) and for permitting the operation of Christian associations that were banned in 1946 even though they were compatible with democracy. Democratic principle in the economy was urged formerly, too, but Barankovics considered it necessary above all against plutocracy. This demand referred to Giesswein's "evangelical socialism" and Barankovics considered market economy acceptable if it is supplemented with an effective social safety net. In justified cases, the party accepted and agreed with the nationalization of certain large estates and strategic industries, but they also urged the protection of smallholders, artisans and small factories. In order to implement social issues in democracy, they proposed that a social constitution be elaborated and adapted. The moral basis of such a constitution should be the enforcement of justice, the protection of human rights, the establishment and proper functioning of democratic local governments. Its components are the autonomous chambers and the trade unions, the legal status of which must be guaranteed by law. According to their slogan, DNP wished to implement "socialism perfected in the spirit of the gospel". Strongly differentiating them from former Christian political parties, the DNP's policies were characterized by social sensibility, the support of the workers and "the ordinary people" against large estate holders and the plutocracy; by tolerance towards national minorities, by demanding rights to the use of language, the dissemination of culture and the endeavour to build a local government system. The party's leader was realistic about Hungary's manoeuvring space in foreign politics. He

¹³⁶ A kiegyezés reményével. Keresztes Sándorral beszélget Elmer István [Hoping for Reconciliation. István Elmer talks with Sándor Keresztes] Kairosz Publishing House, Budapest, 2008. pp. 68–69. Also confirmed in Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 2) 1945–1949.

¹³⁷ Interconfessionality was not always achieved. Out of the 71 MP's of the DNP, only 5 (a meagre 7%) were from other denominations.

was aware that the world order coming forth as a consequence of the Yalta agreement and the neighbourhood of the Soviet Union as a great power had to be accepted.¹³⁸

Organization work with the election campaign was coordinated by György Eszterhás¹³⁹, a former MP and head of public administration department at FKgP. After the previous organizations of the Smallholders' Party fell apart, the DNP's county units were established mostly in the West Hungary. The new party fully took over the FKgP's Zala, Vas, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Somogy county organizations, but the transformation of smallholders' party organizations into DNP units also accelerated in Baranya, Tolna, Heves, Nógrád, Szabolcs-Szatmár and Csongrád counties where DNP previously had no local organizations. Regarding organization and propaganda work, the mobilization of KALOT members was invaluable. Support from former representatives who either left or were excluded from FKgP and now took roles in the Democratic People's Party meant a lot and so did the support of low-ranking priests who did pastoral work. According to memos from the period, 101,000 forints were spent on party propaganda, half of which remained a debt for the time to come. In 40% of Hungary, they could not even hold rallies owing to budget constraints. The cost of posters and flyers was paid by local party members.¹⁴⁰ The party successfully set up an election list in 14 constituencies. However, they failed to find suitable candidates in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county and in the Fejér-Komárom-Esztergom constituencies they chose not to propose candidates so as to avoid open confrontation with the Prince Primate.¹⁴¹ Already before the launch of the election campaign and the announcement of election programmes, an attempt was made to establish a worldview-based party, but talks on uniting DNP and the so-called Catholic wing of the FKgP failed.¹⁴² After that DNP did not seek election alliances anymore, but the collaboration of the opposition parties (DNP – MFP (Magyar Függetlenségi Párt, Hungarian Independence Party) – FMDP Független Magyar Demokrata Párt, Hungarian Independent Democratic Party) was implemented in certain constituencies.¹⁴³ There is extensive literature discussing the elections held on 31 August 1947. The exact results of the so-called “blue-ballot elections” perhaps will never be known due to the aforementioned legal restrictions and the uncertain number of those who voted multiple times with the blue ballots.¹⁴⁴ According to official data, the Democratic People's Party received 16.4% of valid votes, making it second among all participating parties and first among opposition parties. The party's national and county list produced 60 mandates. The DNP's real voting base was in West Hungary: they achieved absolute majority in Vas and Zala counties and won the most votes among all parties in the Baranya-Tolna, Somogy, Veszprém, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg

¹³⁸ Gergely, 2007. p. 148.

¹³⁹ György Eszterhás (1916–2002): lawyer, official at the Ministry of the Interior. MP for the FKgP from 1945 to 1947 and for the DNP from 1947 to 1949

¹⁴⁰ Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 2) 1945–1949.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Izsák, 1985. p. 94.

¹⁴³ This type of cooperation was also implemented in Kiskunhalas. Cf. Róbert Szabó: Egy értelmiségi parasztvezér. Nagy Szeder István (1907–1994) [An Intellectual Leader of Peasants. István Nagy Szeder (1907–1994)]. In: Halasi Múzeum 2. Emlékkönyv a Thorma János Múzeum 130. évfordulójára [2nd Memorial Book for the 130th Anniversary of the János Thorma Museum]. János Thorma Museum, Kiskunhalas, 2004. p. 246.

¹⁴⁴ Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 3) 1949–1963. On the evening of the elections, based on information received from the Ministry of the Interior, Barankovics mentioned that 80 DNP candidates were elected to MPs, then assumed that the vote count was doctored and that opposition votes were counted as coalition party votes.

constituencies. The party enjoyed significant support in Heves–Nógrád–Hont and average support in Borsod–Gömör–Abaúj–Zemplénben. At the same time, DNP received only 4.9% of votes in the greater Budapest area and received relatively fewer votes in East Hungary, too. Statistics showed that DNP could be considered a Catholic party, and it had the highest ratio of female voters¹⁴⁵ among the parties, except for the Christian Women League (Keresztény Női Tábor - KNT).¹⁴⁶ The inaugural session of the new parliament was held on 16 September 1947. DNP's elected MPs held a two-day private session at the pension of Lajos Pócza's¹⁴⁷ relatives in Hévíz on 12-14 September 1947, discussing general theoretical and political issues, ways of building the party organization and taking a stand on the party's advised conduct in parliament. An interesting and colourful event of the meeting was the speech of Ferenc Matheovits¹⁴⁸ that predicted with almost prophetic clarity the hardships awaiting the DNP's parliamentary fraction.¹⁴⁹ A similar convention was held at the Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in early November 1947.¹⁵⁰

Originally, the party had 60 MPs, but with the addition of substitute members after resignations from multiple mandates and the promotion of subsequent substitutes, DNP had 71 representatives until the parliament was dissolved. In the eye of the general public, these selected representatives were the party's face. Regarding the original profession of DNP MPs, the high ratio of smallholders, farmers and agrarians among them was apparent, and was only in par with the number of professionals (teachers, attorneys and lawyers).¹⁵¹ The number of employees in their parliamentary fraction was lower, and there was only one entrepreneur and three artisans among them. The election of two clerics was an indication of the party's nature. On the call of their superiors, however, these individuals resigned from their parliamentary position immediately after receiving their mandate. The education level of the DNP parliamentary fraction was surprisingly high: 12 MPs were secondary school graduates, 28 MPs had a college or university degree while 13 representatives only completed 6 grades of elementary school. This high education level guaranteed their high quality of work in the parliament.¹⁵² After the success at the 1947 elections, Christian democracy appeared in the parliament as an alternative to the totalitarian communist dictatorship that was under establishment at the time. However, the use of the opportunity was made unrealistic – not only because of internal power struggles, but mostly because of Soviet military presence and the unfavourable international situation. Barankovics and the members of the DNP's parliamentary fraction participated in all debates taken on the agenda. They uttered criticism and, as an opposition party, they also formulated their own solution proposals. They focused

¹⁴⁵ Hubai, 2000. pp. 112–114.

¹⁴⁶ Christian Women League – a party standing up for Christian socialist principles that was active in the 1924–1944 and 1945–1949 periods. The party was led by Margit Slachta (1884–1974), a teacher and nun, the first female MP in Hungary (1920–1922), prioress of the Social Brothers and Sisters Association, independent MP from 1945 to 1947 and from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁴⁷ Lajos Pócza (1909–1993): public administration expert. MP for the FKgP in 1945–1947, member of DNP's parliamentary fraction in 1947–1948, then independent MP until he emigrated.

¹⁴⁸ Ferenc Matheovits (1914–1995): district judge, member of DNP's parliamentary fraction in 1947–1948. A political prisoner for more than 19 years after 1949.

¹⁴⁹ Lajos Pócza: *A Demokrata Néppárt története*. [History of the Democratic People's Party]. Magyar Élet [Hungarian Life], Melbourne-Sydney, 1989. p. 82. (hereinafter: Pócza, 1989)

¹⁵⁰ *Hazánk*, 14 November 1947.

¹⁵¹ Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 2) 1945–1949. According to the categorization used by Barankovics, out of the 60 original MPs, 21 were farmers, two were workers and all others were craftsmen, traders and professionals.

¹⁵² Mária Csicskó-Róbert Szabó: *A Demokrata Néppárt képviselői*. [The Representatives of DNP]. In: (Edit.) Zoltán K. Kovács – Pál Rosdy: *Az idő élén jártak...i.m.* [They Were Almost Ahead of Their Time... op.cit.] pp. 119–188.

mostly on what was considered the key issues of Hungary's public life: on the establishment of democracy and on the protection of human rights; on the protection of ordinary people within the new economic order; on religious freedom and on safeguarding the rights of the churches.¹⁵³

On 16 October 1947, the party elected new officials. The position of chairman remained vacant. Barankovics was elected general secretary. The party's vice chairmen were Pál Szabados,¹⁵⁴ Sándor Eckhardt and Ferenc Kováts,¹⁵⁵ who was also elected as chairman of the party's agrarian department. The chairman of the board of representatives was Ödön Mészáros,¹⁵⁶ with János Bodnár,¹⁵⁷ József Pécsi¹⁵⁸ and Kálmán Iszak¹⁵⁹ serving as vice chairmen. Sándor Keresztes¹⁶⁰ was elected as secretary of the board of representatives. László Kováts¹⁶¹ was elected as moderator of disputes while János Berkes¹⁶² and Lajos Nagy¹⁶³ were elected as mediators.¹⁶⁴ Until the summer of 1948, Barankovics perhaps still had hopes that the Christian democracy he represented may have a place in the so-called "people's democracy". He strove to win support from the party's parliamentary fraction to his differentiated stand that focused on gaining time, on the long-term perspective and took into consideration the real policy environment. Within the parliamentary faction, his endeavour was mainly supported by Ferenc Babóthy,¹⁶⁵ Sándor Eckhardt, Sándor Bálint, György Farkas, Sándor Keresztes, Vid Mihelics, György Rónay¹⁶⁶ and József Ugrin. Practically they represented the DNP's genuinely Christian democratic wing. Lawyers (mostly from the countryside) who held leading positions in the party and former smallholder party politicians who were active in local politics were less flexible and supported the Prince Primate's "national resistance" policy. (The Cardinal was of the opinion that a more powerful stand was or would have been necessary against the communist party's anti-church and anti-religious actions. Similarly to several politicians of the time, he believed that East-Central Europe would only be under Soviet rule for a transition period that will come to an end once the peace treaty is signed. Since he believed the time until then would be short, the Cardinal considered all negotiations with coalition governments that involved communists unnecessary, what is more, suspicious. He regarded the DNP's compromise-oriented political strategy as divisive to opposition unity.) The differences between the two political approaches were not only tactical but strategic conflicts evolved as well.¹⁶⁷ A speech by György Farkas (3 March 1948) proposing the acceptance of the Treaty of

¹⁵³ Zoltán K. Kovács: A Demokrata Néppárt küzdelme az országgyűlésben és a közéletben (1947–1949). [The Struggle of the Democratic People's Party in Parliament and in Public Life]. In: *Félbemaradt reformkor... i.m. [Reform Era Unfinished... op.cit.]* pp. 198–239 (hereinafter: Kovács K., 1990)

¹⁵⁴ Pál Szabados (1908–1986): tailor. Secretary of EMSZO in 1939–1944. MP for the DNP in 1947–1948

¹⁵⁵ Ferenc Kováts (1902–1982): small holder, farmer. MP for the FKgP and for the DNP from 1945 and 1947, respectively.

¹⁵⁶ Ödön Mészáros (1887–1965): teacher, educator. MP for the DNP from 1947.

¹⁵⁷ János Bodnár (1904–1996): cantor-teacher, school director. MP for the FKgP and for the DNP from 1945 and 1947, respectively.

¹⁵⁸ József Pécsi (1899–1951): agrarian, farmer. MP for the FKgP and for the DNP from 1945 and 1947, respectively.

¹⁵⁹ Iszak Kálmán (1906–1974): Employee of Hungarian Railways, station master. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁶⁰ Sándor Keresztes (1919–2013): lawyer, financial labour supervisor. MP for the DNP in 1947–1948. MP for the KDNP in 1990 and from 1994 to 1998. Chairman of the KDNP in 1989–1990.

¹⁶¹ László Kováts (1913–2000): agrarian, forest engineer. MP for the FKgP in 1945–1947 and 1990–1994. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁶² János Berkes (1902–1992): cantor-teacher, school director. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁶³ Lajos Nagy (1915–1993): farmer, army officer, factory hand. MP for the FKgP and for the DNP from 1945 and 1947, respectively.

¹⁶⁴ Hazánk, 24 October 1947.

¹⁶⁵ Babóthy Ferenc (1915–2004): horticulturist, organizer of KALOT, later employee and factory worker. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁶⁶ György Rónay (1913–1978): poet, writer, literary translator. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁶⁷ Kovács K., 1990. p. 232. In a contemporary assessment of the situation, rendered greater importance to this. He believed pressure from Mindszenty was the cause behind the departure of Mihelics and Rónay from Új Ember and behind the resignation of clergy members Béla Bartha and Bernát P. Károlyi from their position as MPs. Archivio Generale dell Scuole Pie (AGSP), Vince Tomek's bequest. Manuscript of others (Set no. 4.), documents and notes of István Barankovics on the operation of the Democratic People's Party (item 2) 1945–1949.

Friendship and Mutual Assistance between Hungary and the Soviet Union¹⁶⁸ triggered exits from the party. (Technical literature labels groups representing different opinions within the party as rightist, centrist and leftist. This qualification, however, seems to stem from the political terminology of the era rather than being a true reflection of the DNP's work in parliament and elsewhere. The main reason of polarization within the party was the different assessment of the relationship between the DNP and Mindszenty, and, as a result, the different conclusions concerning the party's desirable strategy. To a minor extent, conflicts could also derive from personal differences of opinion, originating in the lack of trust generated by Barankovics's leadership style. (His critics within the party sometimes wanted to see a more powerful representation of opposition views from him, and sometimes labelled his compromise-seeking approach as opportunism.)¹⁶⁹ By the summer of 1948, the DNP's countryside organizations practically ceased operations due to pressure from the political left and harassment by the Hungarian Secret Police (ÁVH – State Security Authority). This was in part a calculated step by which the fraction and the party's leadership intended to protect their supporters from regular harassment by the authorities. The attempt to take over the seats of resigned FKgP members of local governments failed, too.

In the parliamentary debate on the nationalization of church schools on 16 June 1948, as the presenter of the minority (opposition) opinion, Barankovics outlined his views knowing clearly that the DNP was not in a position to block the passing of the bill. This speech in the parliament is one the most characteristic of all his political appearances. He clarified certain theoretical principles that have always provided guidance regarding the relationships among individuals, families and society. In this debate, Barankovics's starting point was that education is a public matter, but not exclusively. "Education is always carried out by a community" he said. "One is born into a family, and that is the first educating community. But a Christian person is also born into a third community in addition to family and society. This third community is the Church [...] Therefore, education is not the exclusive responsibility of any single one of these three communities. It is rather a right and obligation of all three of them, of family, society and church alike." His school policy conclusion that should be enforced in a parliamentary democracy, stemmed from Christian natural law arguments: "...in a state with mixed worldviews, the single solution that equally observes the right of the Church and the right of the state is to have state-run and church-run schools at each tier of the education system.... We strive for such solution" – declared Barankovics. He also pointed out that the long-term objective of nationalization is to fully exclude worldviews from education.¹⁷⁰ After the bill was passed, the deprivation of DNP MP's from their parliamentary mandates accelerated, signalling the start of the endgame.¹⁷¹ Officers of the DNP's parliamentary fraction were elected for the last time on 3 November 1948. Imre Kálmán Székely¹⁷² was elected as chairman, Jenő Csépe¹⁷³ and József Pécsi became vice chairmen,

¹⁶⁸ Kovács K., 1990. p. 233.

¹⁶⁹ Varga, 1981. p. 99. and Pócza, 1989. pp. 106–107.

¹⁷⁰ Gergely, 2007. p. 153.

¹⁷¹ János Berkes, Sándor Keresztes, Kálmán Iszak, Pál Szabados and József Ugrin were deprived of their parliamentary mandates. To prevent the same, József Pörnecei resigned from his position. 7-9 July 1948.

¹⁷² Kálmán Imre Székely (1893–1980): lawyer. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁷³ Jenő Csépe (1900–1966): middle school teacher. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

Zoltán K. Kovács¹⁷⁴ was elected as secretary, Ferenc Babóthy as chief mediator, Miklós Mézes¹⁷⁵ and Lajos Nagy as mediators. Not knowing what was to come, the party still decided on intensifying their activities in the parliament. Another plan that came up was that the DNP would send representatives to the International Christian Socialist Association's conference.¹⁷⁶ Barankovics's very last speech in the parliament was delivered on 14 December 1948. In that speech, he already predicted that the party would be dissolved as the "circumstances have changed". Cardinal Mindszenty's arrest on 26 December 1948 and the total shattering of the DNP's operation made it clear that not Barankovics's views but the circumstances changed by early 1949. In an attempt to exploit their former political conflict, the communists wished to use Barankovics in the planned show trial of Mindszenty, as star witness of the political charges raised against the cardinal. When meeting Barankovics for the last time on 25 January 1949, Rákosi strove to force him to sign a declaration condemning Mindszenty, mentioning the potential termination of the DNP's parliamentary fraction and possible dangers to the personal security of Brankovics's fellow MPs as arguments.¹⁷⁷ On 1 February 1949, prior to the commencement of the Mindszenty trial, Barankovics escaped to Austria. In a press statement issued in Vienna, he announced that he already declared in writing the dissolution of the Democratic People's Party before he left Hungary. Those members of the DNP's "political committee" (to which the DNP's Executive Committee was renamed in the summer of 1948) who remained in Hungary and were not imprisoned passed a resolution on 4 February, declaring the dissolution of the party, even though neither Barankovics nor the said DNP body (that never actually operated) were entitled to do so. At its session on 10 March 1949, the parliament acknowledged the DNP's termination. Thus Barankovics's party, a political formation that stood on the same theoretical basis as the modern and successful Christian democratic parties of Europe at the time, stopped to exist for four decades.

¹⁷⁴ Zoltán K. Kovács (1924–2008): agrarian, journalist. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁷⁵ Miklós Mézes (1920): farmer, financial and taxation expert. MP for the DNP from 1947 to 1949.

¹⁷⁶ Hazánk, 17 December 1948.

¹⁷⁷ István Barankovics: Sorsdöntő beszélgetés Rákosival. In: Félbemaradt reformkor... i.m. [Reform Era Unfinished...] pp. 242–250.

V. Christian democrats in emigration

The government's anti-church policy began to intensify in 1946. First the mass organizations of Catholic reform movements (KALOT, EMSZO [Workers' Division of Parishes], Hivatásszervezet [Professional Organization]) were banned, then, with the gradual implementation of the one-party dictatorship, the religious orders providing education and caring for the ill were terminated, and their assets and properties confiscated. The State Security Authority, i.e. the secret police monitored the DNP's elected representatives, nominees and key supporters already before the party's success at the 1947 elections. Persecution by the authorities intensified in close correlation with the firmness of the DNP's opposition stand and with their parliamentary rejection of the nationalization of church schools (16 June 1948). Between November 1948 and December 1956, twelve representatives were forced to emigrate while several others did not manage to escape from Hungary.¹⁷⁸ The majority DNP MPs who emigrated went to live in the USA; three of them settled in Canada. Lajos Pócza ended up living in Australia while three others remained in Western Europe. Most of those who fled from Hungary participated in the activities of Christian democratic organization abroad, either Hungarian units operating in exile or Western European ones. All formerly active MP's became members of the Hungarian National Committee (Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány – MNB). László Varga also assumed duties in the MNB's Executive Committee and István Barankovics was chairman of the Culture and Education Division of the Committee from 1951 on. However, many of them did not join the Hungarian National Committee after the 1956 revolution and freedom fight. Still, Miklós Mézes was appointed as the Hungarian Committee's representative in Canada on 25 March 1959. Then with the exception of Barankovics, each former DNP MP took roles in the Hungarian Christian People's Movement (Magyar Keresztény Népmozgalom), established at a meeting held in San Pastore near Rome, Italy, in May 1949. At the meeting, Ferenc Babóthy and György Eszterhás represented Hungarian Christian democrats in person and Eszterhás was elected into the Movement's Executive Committee. Zoltán K. Kovács served in the same movement as headquarter's secretary from 1951 to 1960. In 1957, he was one of the founders of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Union, an organization founded in Munich, Germany, that also integrated Hungarian Christian democrats who escaped from the country in 1956. László Varga and György Eszterhás worked as founding members of the Central European Christian Democratic Union (CDUCE), established in New York in 1950. They were joined in that organization by Ferenc Pethe in 1952, while Barankovics served as the CDUCE's chairman

¹⁷⁸ László Varga escaped to Austria in November 1948. Zoltán Pál (1898–1989) army officer, former secretary of the Professional Organization in Debrecen, the KDNP's general secretary, MP for the DNP in 1947–1948. He left Hungary in early 1949 while Lajos Pócza left in January 1949. István Barankovics emigrated with the help of the United States Embassy in Budapest on the day before the Mindszenty trial began. On 22 February 1949, a larger group of DNP MPs led Mézes Miklós by Zoltán K. Kovács, Ferenc Pethe (1917–2006) journalist and secondary school teacher, Miklós Villányi (1923–1994) canto-teacher, draughtsperson, György Eszterhás and Ferenc Babóthy crossed the border to Austria. Former FKgP MP and member of the DNP faction Gyula Belső (1918–1991) agrarian and appraiser arrived in Austria in March 1949. In November 1956, the party's stand-by MP János Koczor (1918–1999) who signed to the party on 4 August 1948, an agrarian then car body manufacturing group leader, joined those who had emigrated earlier. This summary is based on Mária Csicskó – Róbert Szabó: A Demokrata Néppárt képviselői [MPs of the Democratic People's Party]. In: Az idő élén jártak. Kereszténydemokrácia Magyarországon (1944–1949) [They Were Almost Ahead of Their Time. Christian Democracy in Hungary 1944–1949]. Edit. Zoltán K. Kovács and Pál Rosdy. István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 1996. pp. 119–188.

from 1958 until he passed away. In addition to running his law office, László Varga also played an active role in the community of Hungarian emigrants in the United States. In 1950, he took part in the establishment of the International Christian Union. In 1986, Pethe joined the Assembly of Captive European Nations. As a member of Canada's Progressive Conservative Party, Miklós Mézes represented the values of Hungarian Christian democracy in emigrant organizations. Gyula Belső became member and then representative candidate of the Republican Party in the USA. In 1983, he was elected as chairman of the National American Hungarian Republican Party.¹⁷⁹ Still, after 1949, it took almost forty years for modern Hungarian Christian democracy to reappear legally in Hungary...

¹⁷⁹ Zoltán K. Kovács: Magyar kereszténydemokraták az emigrációban [Hungarian Christian Democrats in Emigration]. In: Félbemaradt reformkor... [Reform Era Unfinished...]: [Collection of studies published in the *Katolikus Szemle* / Catholic Review and writings supplemented and reworked in 2005, Rome 1991 – Budapest 2005]. Püski Publishing House, Budapest, 2006. pp. 257–290.

RITA MÁRIA KISS

STRATEGIES OF PARTY IDENTITY IN KDNP'S POLICY (1989-1998)

In the years 1989–1998, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) walked a rather colourful political path. Between its foundation on 15 March 1989¹⁸⁰ and the first parliamentary elections in 1990, the party positioned itself as being part of the constructive opposition.¹⁸¹ Then, as a parliamentary party already, they were coalition partners of the Antall government. During the Horn government from 1994 to 1998, they were in opposition again. After the 1998 elections, they had to participate in Hungarian politics as a non-parliamentary party. In that period, Christian democracy was represented in the parliament by the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance (Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség – MKDSZ), an organization of politicians who left the KDNP in the autumn of 1997. Owing to its declared ideology, the Hungarian public regarded KDNP as a *historic party* that stood out from the political field of 1988–90 with its strongly *Christian worldview*. Informed citizens also knew that the Christian democratic parties of Western Europe, that were often referenced in KDNP's communication, gained respect for taking an initiator's role in launching the European unification process after World War II and that these parties were not only actual or potential governing parties but also political organizations, *people's parties* that could integrate broad and diverse segments of society in the respective countries. This study presents the KDNP's identity policy in 1989–1998, focusing on these three elements and on a few key events in the party's history. Reference to the European example of contemporary Christian democracy as a key legitimizing element was and has always been present in the various identity compositions of the party. Similarly, the European horizon played a decisive role in the party's policies regarding historical issues, in developing definitions outlining its worldview and in shaping its people's party strategy. Therefore, throughout this study, we will also discuss this equally important fourth element of the party's self definition in conjunction with the other three elements.¹⁸² We will outline changes in KDNP's identity strategy upon the three party history junctions of the first three election cycles. We will scrutinize the party's launch in 1989–90, when the first leadership¹⁸³ of the party were forced to lay the foundations

¹⁸⁰ The resolution on launching the party's nationwide organizing campaign was made at the convention held in the Attila József High School building in Budapest on 23 June 1989. The party's national organizing committee was formed on 1 August 1989 and the party's temporary statutes were adopted on the same day. Consisting of 154 delegates, the National Board convened at the Attila József High School on 30 September 1989. The party was registered by the Court of Budapest on 6 December of the same year and its election programme was adopted on 1 January 1990. The KDNP's first chairman was Sándor Keresztes. Pursuant to the decision of the second national board meeting held on 23 April 1990, László Surján succeeded Keresztes as chairman. Róbert Szabó: *Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (KDNP) a rendszerváltás éveiben (1989-1990)* [The Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) in the Years of Political Transition]. In *70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*. [The Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary.] István Barankovics Foundation. 2014. pp. 97-98. As for Lajos Izsák, the party's establishment was officially announced on 17 March 1989. Lajos Izsák: *Az 1947-es ellenzéki pártok utódpártjai a forradalom és a rendszerváltás idején*. [Successors of the Opposition Parties of 1947 in the Time of the 1956 Revolution and the Regime Change in 1989-90] In *Jogtörténeti Szemle* [Legal History Review] 1/2011, p. 25. As for Miklós Hasznos, the foundation date was 23 June 1989. Cf. Hasznos Miklós észrevételei. [Comments of Miklós Hasznos] 1 May 1992. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1992.

¹⁸¹ Cf. In a press interview in the autumn of 1989, Sándor Keresztes described the KDNP as a political force that was ready to make compromises for the sake of a peaceful transition. Cf. *Békés átmenet kompromisszumokkal*. [Peaceful Transition with Compromises] Magyar Hírlap, 30 September 1989. Further: Keresztényi út. A KDNP 1990-es 100 pontos választási programja. [The Christian Way. The KDNP's 100-Item Election Programme in 1990.] MNL OL P2246, Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 56. (Box 52) A collection of newspaper articles related to Christian democracy. Further: Tibor Füzessy's article: *Miért írtuk alá [Why We Signed It]* in *Hazánk*, 1989/2, explaining why the KDNP signed the closing document of the National Roundtable negotiations.

¹⁸² The KDNP's international relations are presented herein in Éva Petrás' study, titled *The Voyage of Hungarian Christian Democracy to the Heart of Europe*.

¹⁸³ Chairman: dr. Sándor Keresztes. Vice chairmen: dr. Tibor Füzessy, László Seszták (workers' section) István Szabó (agrarian section). Chief secretary: dr. Emese Ugrin. National secretaries: dr. Miklós Gáspár, László Lántzky, Miklós Lukács (youth leader). Chief party prosecutor: dr. Miklós Hasznos. Party director:

for the organization's image in a high-pressure identity policy situation in a relatively short time. Analyzing the period of the party's first congress in 1992, we will look at the attempts of the party's leadership,¹⁸⁴ reshuffled soon after the first elections, to upgrade the party's image and the results of those attempts. Finally, in the late 1990s,¹⁸⁵ when the concurrence of identities within the party was stronger than ever before, the elite groups that emerged along the internal dividing lines came up with their own party identity endeavours. We will discuss these endeavours and finally review briefly the perspectives of subsequent development.

Examining a party's identity strategies is probably the best way of presenting that party's character. However, in order to comprehend the changes of the party's identity, it is indispensable to review the journey that the Christian Democratic People's Party completed between 1989 and 1998. Based on the election and parliamentary indicators¹⁸⁶ of the KDNP's political performance, the following picture unfolds: at the first elections in 1990, KDNP was able to delegate candidates in 105 of the 176 individual constituencies and successfully nominated lists in 14 counties.¹⁸⁷ In March, they got 6.64% of votes and became part of the first freely elected parliament with a fraction of 21 MPs¹⁸⁸. As a coalition partner in the Antall government, KDNP received one ministerial position. László Surján¹⁸⁹ led the Ministry of Welfare until the end of that parliamentary term. Owing to subsequent events under the same government's term, Tibor Füzessy took over the position of Minister of Civilian Intelligence Services in February 1992. In February 1993, János Latorcai¹⁹⁰ replaced Iván Szabó (Hungarian Democratic Forum – Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF) at the helm of the Ministry for Industry and Trade. Thus the party had three ministerial positions by the end of the parliamentary term as opposed to just one that it had at the beginning of it. This increase of governmental positions indicated KDNP's growing political weight. Probably one reason behind this trend was that the government lost 12 mandates in parliament when József Torgyán's followers in the Independent Smallholders' Party (Független Kisgazdapárt – FKgP) left the coalition government in February 1992.¹⁹¹ The split in the MDF fraction¹⁹² also reevaluated the Christian democratic fraction that was regarded as stable throughout that parliamentary term and even increased its headcount with two persons. At the 1994 parliamentary elections, KDNP did not have any problems producing an adequate number of

Pál Marik. Leader of women's section: Zsuzsa Dobrányi. Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve [Hungary's Political Yearbook], 1989. Edited by Sándor Kurtán, Péter Sándor, László Vass. ÖKONÓMIA FOUNDATION – ECONOMIX RT. 1990-1999. Compact Disc.

¹⁸⁴ The spring of 1990 brought an important change in the party's internal affairs: At the National Board's second session held on 27 May, the KDNP's leadership was renewed. László Surján replaced Sándor Keresztes as chairman while the National Board elected Sándor Keresztes as honorary chairman. The new board consisted of László Surján, chairman; János Birkás, Tamás Lukács, Miklós Pálos and László Varga, co-chairmen. The National Board session held on 16-17 March 1991 confirmed and extended Surján's appointment as chairman. In: Hungary's Political Yearbook, op. cit. 1991.

¹⁸⁵ In accordance with the amended statutes, the National Board session held in Budapest on 28-29 January 1995 divided the chairman's functions and created the position of managing vice chairman. This position went to Tibor Füzessy (who resigned subsequently when he became the deputy speaker of the Parliament); György Giczy, who promised to strengthen the party's unique identity, was elected as chairman. Cf. Hungary's Political Yearbook, op. cit. 1996.

¹⁸⁶ Source of election results and lines-up of parliamentary fractions: Home pages of the National Election Office and the Parliament: <http://www.valasztas.hu/> <http://www.parlament.hu/> Downloaded 24.06.2015.

¹⁸⁷ The KDNP failed to produce election lists in Békés, Fejér, Hajdú-Bihar, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok and Somogy counties which was a major drawback considering the 4% threshold to parliament. In a fair assumption, if the party had become stronger by the time of the elections and if it had not struggled with human resourcing issues, it would have been more successful in nominating candidates and party lists, and it would have achieved better results at the first elections. Many believe that organizational problems stemmed from the party's relatively late launch.

¹⁸⁸ Leaders of parliamentary fractions: 02.05.1990 – 17.06.1992: Tibor Füzessy; from 24.06.1990: Béla Csépe.

¹⁸⁹ Originally, Surján was not a member of the fraction, thus he was not bound by fractional discipline before September 1990 when he took over the position of departing chairman Sándor Keresztes.

¹⁹⁰ He became a member of the party when he was a minister already.

¹⁹¹ 36 of the 44 smallholders' party MP's remained by Antall's side.

¹⁹² István Csurka was excluded from the MDF in the summer of 1993 after which he founded the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life [Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja - MIÉP], taking several MDF representatives with him from the MDF fraction. Those who left the MDF in the spring of 1996 founded the Hungarian Democratic People's Party.

candidates and lists: they nominated 163 individual candidates¹⁹³ and had 20 regional lists, thus collecting votes to the party list from the whole of Hungary.¹⁹⁴ At the elections, the same six parties reached the entry threshold in the parliament as in 1990. However, out of the three parties of the former governing coalition¹⁹⁵, only KDNP was able to expand its voter base (they received 62,000 more votes) and to increase the number of their parliamentary mandates (from 21 to 22).¹⁹⁶ Still, in the political landscape that took shape after the elections, this result was not sufficient for the party to retain its position in parliament. They had to share the fate of the former largest governing party, MDF: they had to put up with an opposition role.

KDNP arrived at the 1998 elections after a lengthy internal crisis that started midway into the second parliamentary term and also impacted the party's performance at those elections. Although the crisis within the party that evolved in the second term did not shake the party organization, as KDNP was able to nominate 146 individual candidates and to set up 20 regional lists and a national one, their election results were significantly poorer than at prior elections. No KDNP candidate won an individual mandate. The party's lists received a total of 105,000 votes (2.31%), indicating the loss of two thirds of its former voters and its parliamentary representation. However, this failure in 1998 did not mean that former KDNP members were not present in the parliament. Spawned from the party's internal debates and founded on 17 August 1997, the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance (MKDSZ)¹⁹⁷ successfully managed their politicians. The KDNP's parliamentary fraction ceased to exist owing to the split. For seven of the 11 MP's who changed to the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – FIDESZ) fraction, FIDESZ already provided political shelter and put them on their party list for the 1998 elections, and subsequently made them members of the FIDESZ parliamentary fraction.¹⁹⁸

I. A turn of historical significance – an opportunity of historical significance – and a historical party

One decisive component of KDNP's political character is that it strongly relies on the identity-creating force of Hungary's history in shaping the identity of its own political

¹⁹³ Finally (like in 1990) KDNP candidates won in three constituencies: András Rapcsák, Gábor Leitner and Dénes Pálfi (Hódmezővásárhely, Szob and Zalaszentgrót constituencies, respectively). These three winning candidates were not nominated again in 1994.

¹⁹⁴ In respect of votes, KDNP lists did not perform poorly. Altogether, the party received 62,000 more votes than in 1990. Still, the final results of the 1994 elections were perceived as a failure by the party's board.

¹⁹⁵ In the same period, MDF lost half of its supporters (garnering 11.73 % of votes) and out of the three smallholders' parties participating in the elections, FKgP led by József Torgyán suffered a setback of votes from 11.73 % to 8.82 %.

¹⁹⁶ Leaders of the KDNP's parliamentary fraction: 28.06.1994 – 19.02.1995: Tibor Füzessy; 20.02.1995 – 21.07.1997: Tamás Isépy.

¹⁹⁷ Board: László Surján, MP and former KDNP chairman became chairman of MKDSZ. Other board members included Tamás Báthly, mayor of Kőszeg at the time; theologian Péter Harrach, who was a coordinator of secular matters at the Secretariat of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference; József Mészáros, associate professor at the Sociology Department of the Budapest University of Technology (BME); Judit Szemkeő Szilágyiné, Training Director of SZÜV Rt. [an IT and business management firm] and managing secretary József Gärtner, an attorney from Székesfehérvár. The board held its first national meeting in Győr already in the same month that it was established on 30 August 1997.

¹⁹⁸ Tamás Isépy, István Ivanics, János Latorcai, András Rapcsák, György Rubovszky, László Surján and László Varga. From the MPs who joined the Fidesz fraction after the party split but before the 1998 elections already, Béla Csépe became chief advisor to Viktor Orbán; Kálmán Kovács was the Fidesz's candidate at the Csongrád constituency, but he stepped back to support of the FKgP candidate in the second round and thus he was one of the few Fidesz "trade-ins" under the Orbán-Torgyán treaty (beginning in the autumn that year, he was a member and vice chairman of the Csongrád County General Meeting over multiple terms); Gábor Leitner was the only name who was not among the candidates at the 1998 elections.

community.¹⁹⁹ Politics of memory is an important segment of the identity policy of political players at all times, but it was especially in the focus during the formation years of the multi-party system in Hungary. The situation preceding the 1990 elections forced parties²⁰⁰ who stepped out from the unknown into the newly emerging political pluralism to define, as successfully as possible, where they come from, what their goals were and why they were the best choice for resolving the problems of the Hungarian society. Although dismantling the one-party state as much as possible was considered as a shared goal, the logics of political competition also dictated that each party differentiates itself from their rivals. Nearly without exception, all parties used the legitimizing power of historic tradition. This reconstruction of historic memories driven by current political ambitions led to several different interpretations and approaches to historic events. Various historic traditions surfaced and offered different identity patterns for voters to identify themselves with. One decisive gap between these approaches related to the interpretation of historic memories. This gap emerged between the so-called historic parties and the opposition groups in the late years of the Kádár era. The latter group cited the recent past and their role in eroding the communist regime, while the historic parties cited historical legal succession that broke in the coalition period (1945-1948). In this phase of the political changes in Hungary, parallel to the parties' endeavours to create their political identity, symbolic political examples were obviously reevaluated.²⁰¹ What gave weight and significance to references to the party's historical past was, first and foremost, that the existence of KDNP did not only legitimize the party itself, it did not only declare that the party was rooted deeply in Hungarian political culture, but it also declared that KDNP represents in the present the democratic traditions of Hungarian history – since the party was an opponent of and persecuted by all 20th century dictatorships. By restoring legal continuity, they promised a return to the organic development of Hungarian history after the decades of the violent interruption thereof.

For the Christian democrats of 1989, István Barankovics's name was a passport to democracy and an entry pass to the Opposition Roundtable [Ellenzéki Kerekasztal - EKA], the body that became the key negotiating partner of the state party.²⁰² György Szokolczai, who applied for membership in the roundtable on behalf of KDNP, used reference to historical roots as an attribute of legit party identity:²⁰³ Szokolczai highlighted the presence of former

¹⁹⁹ In the introduction to the book celebrating the party's 70th anniversary, KDNP chairman Zsolt Semjén defined the three cornerstones of the party's identity as follows: "Who are we? The answer has three elements: We are the only historical party, we are the only Christian social party and we are the only worldview party... Without being guilty of the foible of pride, we should ask the question: Where are the historical parties that began to work again upon the change of the political system?" In 70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt. [The Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary.] op.cit. pp. 7-8.

²⁰⁰ The psychological aspects of the "obsessed-with-the-past" period analysed by Gusztáv Lányi in his study titled A múlt szerepe a politikai rendszerváltozásban [The Role of History in the Change of the Political Regime.] In Rendszerváltozás és politikai pszichológia. [Regime Change and Political Psychology.] Rejtjel Books on Politology, No. 7. Rejtjel Publishing House, Budapest, 2001. pp. 264-274.

²⁰¹ András Bozóki – Gergely Karácsony: Életút és politika: a kerekasztal tárgyalások résztvevői. [Lives and Politics: The Participants of Roundtable Negotiations] In A rendszerváltás foratókönyve. Kerekasztal tárgyalások 1989-ben. Alkotmányos forradalom. Tanulmányok. [The Script of the Political System Change. Roundtable Negotiations in 1989. A Constitutional Revolution. Studies.] (Editor-in-chief: András Bozóki), Volume 7. Magvető Publishing House, Budapest, 1999. p. 344. Hereinafter: Script.

²⁰² The organizing committee was divided over whether the party should join the Opposition Roundtable or not. Generation gaps were tangible behind this division. While elderly members (Sándor Keresztes, József Ugrin) were reluctant to openly take an opposition role and suggested that organizing should be in the focus, the younger generation regarded joining the opposition as a top priority and realized its significance at an earlier stage. Later Sándor Keresztes participated in the negotiations, too. (Younger members also recognized e.g. the publicity benefits of public appearances by the party.) Cf. Script, Volume 7, op. cit. p. 363.

²⁰³ Opposition Roundtable session on 4 June 1989. (Transcribed from video recording.) Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, Debate over the KDNP's admission, pp. 500-516. Comments by Szokolczai to the "historical party" topic: p. 550. and pp. 506-507.

Democratic People's Party (DNP) representatives²⁰⁴ in the KDNP as the party's key characteristic feature. These members represented historical continuity both in terms of ideology and legality. Szokolczai pointed out that KDNP was not a weightless party that came out of nowhere, but a re-founding of a party that used to exist earlier. What is more, some voices in the party said that it was simply the restart of operations.²⁰⁵ By outlining the political character of the cited political predecessor, the DNP, Szokolczai basically laid the foundation of KDNP's identity: *"This party has always been on the progressive side of the Christian approach, characterized by a solid sensibility for social issues. It always has firmly rejected clericalism, directions from the church" – an obvious reference to the debate with Mindszenty – "and conservatism. So we had sharp conflicts with the church in '47... and we don't strive to transform into any kind of church party today, either."*²⁰⁶

With this introduction, Szokolczai opened a perspective to those participants of the roundtable who were familiar with and respected the traditions of Hungarian Catholic politics and Christian democracy, a perspective that enabled them to support the admission of KDNP, accepting an application submitted relatively late. E.g. Imre Boross, negotiating on behalf of the Smallholders' Party, was of the opinion that Christian democracy is a significant ideology that *"enjoys mass support"* even if it is not yet reflected in the party's actual membership figures.²⁰⁷ Being a historian, György Szabad argued that the Opposition Roundtable should admit those historical parties that the *"historical contours of which have taken shape already"*, noting that KDNP, one of the former Christian parties, *"has an outstanding historical reputation"*, and that the programme of Barankovics's party harmonized with the democracy criteria represented by the Opposition Roundtable.²⁰⁸ Szabad expressed his conviction that the KDNP's activities is not intended to trick democracy and that the party would not misuse the "Christian" catchword. He envisaged that the party's role in Hungary's transition to democracy would be that *"it can take the thought of democracy and opposition to segments of society that no other party in the Opposition Roundtable can reach."*²⁰⁹

Representing the Independent Lawyers' Forum, Imre Kónya argued that the type of Christian democracy represented by the KDNP is indispensable in the democratic transition process and thus KDNP is needed both in the Roundtable and in the negotiation process.²¹⁰ Those EKA members who questioned the KDNP's eligibility for Roundtable membership cited the party's failure to comply with the organizational criteria set by the EKA. Even these

²⁰⁴ At the meeting, he listed the members of the KDNP's organizing committee, four of whom were former DNP members: Sándor Keresztes, Ferenc Mateovits, József Ugrin and Szokolczai György. Cf. Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, p. 507. "...The stance of the Christian Democratic Party is that it has existed since 1945. At the 1947 elections, they received more than 800,000 votes. Consequently, the party also exists today as it never ceased operations. Actually it was forced by circumstances to suspend operations but it did not terminate them and did not dissolve itself. This party has existed for nearly 45 years." Session 28 of the Opposition Roundtable. 7 June 1989. Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, pp. 529-530.

²⁰⁵ The reason is that there was no clear stance on whether Barankovics was really entitled to suspend the party's operations. In respect of historical parties (e.g. regarding the smallholders' party) József Antall himself was of the opinion that the party should declare the continuation of operations and not its foundation.

²⁰⁶ Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, p. 511.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 502. It was Boross who highlighted later on in the debate not only the past but also the political weight and significance of European Christian democracy. Cf. Ibid. p. 506.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 503

²⁰⁹ Session 28 of the Opposition Roundtable. 7 June 1989. In Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, p. 532.

²¹⁰ Ibid. p. 534

opponents did not dispute that “Barankovics’s name is an entry pass into this company”²¹¹ or that Hungary’s new democracy needs a Christian party.²¹² Still, owing to their pragmatic approach, they did not consider historic merits sufficient for securing eligibility. “I think history is more than just somebody coming here and repeating things from 40 years ago over and over... simply anyone can come here with a historical name” said Bálint Magyar from the Alliance of Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége - SZDSZ). Imre Mécs pointed out that Hungarian society was not what it had been in 1945–47 anymore and that “it has a different demand structure”. “Maybe a Christian democratic party will grow out from this endeavour that you represent, but the signs of that are not visible yet. And we should expect other [Christian parties], actually they already exist. This whole thing was started a little late.”²¹³ Opponents typically set the political tradition of 1947 against 1989 and the years preceding it. They regarded historic tradition as something that has no evidencing force in the present and thus they assessed the political potential of new political groups based on the actual level of their organization. In Bálint Magyar’s arguments, only the journey travelled by these parties, i.e. their “recent past” mattered. Instead of historic tradition, the struggle of opposition groups to bring down the one-party state was the key merit taken into consideration by the SZDSZ representative. “It is 1989, for God’s sake. Various individuals and organizations have been fighting their fights for ten years, to enable you to sit here... Just because somebody was an MP back in ’47, does it mean he does not need to prove anything [i.e. his eligibility]?”²¹⁴ Then finally the Opposition Roundtable admitted KDNP as a member at their 7 June session.²¹⁵ In this era when identity narratives were becoming increasingly fierce, the KDNP’s formulation of its historic party identity was also one way of competing with political rivals. It served as a differentiating tool, mostly in respect of opposition movements that emerged during the Kádár regime, movements that subsequently turned into political parties.

Thus KDNP was not the only party in the evolving political sphere of 1989-1990 that promised the restoration of historical and legal continuity. Historical parties were proliferating²¹⁶ and while they considered one another as natural allies, they were also rivals. In late 1989 and early 1990, one could only guess but not know for sure that the majority of those groups, with the exception of the FKgP and the KDNP, would prove to be weightless. Real competition evolved only between these two parties, owing to the social-cultural

²¹¹ Wording used by Gábor Fodor who negotiated on behalf of Fidesz. Ibid. p. 504. At Session 28 of the Opposition Roundtable, Bálint Magyar explicitly mentioned that Barankovics’s heritage was an important assurance for the free democrats that they did not support a pro-Mindszenty branch of Catholic movements. Cf. Session 28 of the Opposition Roundtable. In Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, p. 529.

²¹² Comment of Imre Mécs to the debate. Ibid. p. 505.

²¹³ Ibid. p. 512.

²¹⁴ Regarding the debate over KDNP’s joining, see also: Márton Szabó: KDNP az Ellenzéki Kerekasztalnál és a parlamentben. In: A diszkurzív politikatudomány alapjai. [KDNP at the Opposition Roundtable and in the Parliament. In: The Basics of Discursive Political Science.] L’Harmattan 2004. Source: Tankonyvtar.hu. <http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/en/tartalom/tkt/diskurziv/ch18s02.htm> Downloaded: 24.06.2015.

²¹⁵ Session 28 of the Opposition Roundtable. 7 June 1989. Script. Op. cit. Volume 1, p. 540.

²¹⁶ The Social Democratic Party of Hungary [Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt - MSZDP] announced their re-foundation on 9 January 1989. They cited Anna Kéthly as their historic predecessor and they wished to become an authentic working class party. The Hungarian People’s Party [Magyar Néplárt - MNP] was founded on 11 February 1989 and claimed to be the successor of the popular leftist parties of the 1947 National Assembly. Their immediate predecessor organization was the Péter Veress Association established in 1988 and they referred to the former National Peasant Party as their historic predecessor. The Hungarian Independence Party [Magyar Függetlenségi Párt - MFP] entered the political arena in the spring of 1989 as the successor of the Pfeiffer party, almost simultaneously to the Hungarian Radical Party [Magyar Radikális Párt -MRP]. The latter party declared to follow in the footsteps of Imre Csécsy. Declaring their re-launch in May 1989, the Independent Hungarian Democratic Party [Független Magyar Demokrata Párt - FMDP] referred to Pater Balogh’s 1947 party as their legal predecessor. Cf. Lajos Izsák: Az 1947-es ellenzéki pártok utódpartjai a forradalom és a rendszerváltás idején. [Successor Parties of the Opposition Parties of 1947 in the Time of the 1956 Revolution and the Regime Change in 1989-90] In Jogtörténeti Szemle [Legal History Review] 2011. Issue 1, pp. 25-26.

similarities of their supporter base. The FKgP, i.e. the Independent Smallholders' Party²¹⁷ already considered re-launching the party in August 1988 but the new organization was established only on 18 November 1988. The relatively late re-establishment of KDNP influenced not only the party's growth but also the recruitment of party leaders.²¹⁸

The KDNP's historical party image remained a decisive part of the party's identity throughout the campaign for the 1990 elections. The message outlined in the campaign material "*The Election Goals of the Christian Democratic People's Party*", issued by the party's Election Office, was built exclusively on the historical aspect of the party's identity. "*We are a historical party. We have a clear past. We did not participate in the oppression of democracy – we were the victims of oppression. We did not have traitors only persecuted members. This is what provides a moral basis for proclaiming our goals.*"²¹⁹ With this concise message, the party strove to differentiate itself from rival historical parties, pointing out that as a successor of the Democratic People's Party and unlike some of its contestants, the KDNP was not forced to carry burdens. E.g. the KDNP did not compromise its policies like the Smallholders' Party between 1947 and 1949 and it did not merge with the communists like the social democrats did.²²⁰

"*We would not have thought that we would need to wait 42 years for our return [to national politics]*" said the party's doyens to Hungarian voters in one of the party's first political proclamations.²²¹ For the politicians of the former coalition era who returned to the scene in historical parties, the transition from communism offered an opportunity to finish something that they started a very long time ago. As Sándor Keresztes, the party's first chairman put it in 1989: he and his movement were "*coming home after 40 years of wandering*".²²² In a political sense, justice was done and the elderly politicians of these organizations could enjoy the fulfilment of their careers. They were the ones who bridged the two eras of democracy, the coalition years of the late 1940s and the emerging multi-party system in 1989–90.²²³ The KDNP's "*elder statesmen*"²²⁴ – i.e. former politicians of the

²¹⁷ The initial decision to re-launch and reorganize the FKgP was made at Tivadar Pártay's house in Balatonszárszó on 28 August 1988. Finally, the Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (FKgP) was re-founded on 18 November 1988 at the *Pilvax Café* in Budapest. The first chairman was Tivadar Pártay and was subsequently replaced by Vincze Vörös soon thereafter. Cf. Sándor Győriányi: *A Kisgazdapárt regénye a kezdetektől napjainkig*. [The Story of the Smallholders' Party since the Beginnings to Date], Útmutató Publishing House, Budapest, 1995. pp. 73-74.

²¹⁸ Most of the Catholic and protestant intellectuals who established the Áron Márton Society, actually the immediate predecessor of the KDNP, like József Antall or László Sólyom were already members of the MDF when the KDNP was founded. Former DNP representative László Kovács became an MP as an FKgP candidate in 1990. Subsequent KDNP leaders identified several "old DNP members" in the FKgP. Cf. Letter of Chairman László Surján to the KDNP's county organizations about power struggles in the FKgP, 14 July 1991. Party documents. Executive board documents. A rare opposite example was Miklós Gáspár, who was already one of the MDF Budapest leaders when he left the Forum and joined the KDNP when heard that it was re-founded. Cf. Bozóki-Karácsony: *Script*. Op. cit. Volume 7, p. 362.

²¹⁹ A Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt választási célkitűzései. [The Election Goals of the KDNP] MNL OL P2264 Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32), documents on activities in the KDNP.

²²⁰ Cf. Report by Zoltán K. Kovács on the progress of party organizing. (Not dated.) MNL OL P2264 Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32), documents on activities in the KDNP.

²²¹ Cited by: Zsolt Enyedi: *Politika a kereszt jegyében*. [Politics in the Spirit of the Cross] Osiris Publishing House, Budapest, 1999, p. 119.

²²² Report on the recruitment meeting in Szekszárd. *Magyar Nemzet*, 22 June 1989. MNL OL P2246 Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 56 (Box 52), collection of newspaper articles on Christian democracy.

²²³ Cf.: András Bozóki – Gergely Karácsony: *Életút és politika: a kerekasztal tárgyalások résztvevői*. [Lives and Politics: The Participants of Roundtable Negotiations] In *Script*. Op. cit. Volume 7, pp. 344-347.

²²⁴ The party's 14-member organizing committee included four former members of the one-time Barankovics party: Sándor Keresztes, József Ugrin, Ferenc Mateovits and György Szokolczai. According to Róbert Szabó, on the day when the foundation of the party was announced, 14 and ten one-time DNP representatives were still alive in Hungary or abroad, respectively. Cf. *Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt a rendszerváltás éveiben (1989-1990)* [The Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) in the Years of Political Transition] In *70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*. [The Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary.] Op. cit. p. 94.

Democratic People's Party – fulfilled a historic mission as “*their endeavour to save and preserve democracy for future generations was successful.*”²²⁵ The persecution of those of them who remained in Hungary and the fate of those who emigrated are important components of the history of Hungarian Christian democracy, since the life of these politicians rendered credibility to their resistance to dictatorship and the democratic commitment of their party.²²⁶ They were treated as political enemies by both the Rákosi and the Kádár regimes: the former completely annihilated the remainders of the Democratic People's Party and the latter took revenge on the party re-launched in 1956 for their role in the revolution.²²⁷ Pál Marik remembered them in the 30 September 1989 issue of *Hazánk* as follows: “*As a member of the younger generation, I would like to thank the elderly MPs of the [former] Democratic People's Party that they never let the flames of Christian democracy die. They pass on to us, younger members a party history and politics that is an honour to represent.*”²²⁸ As a symbolic recognition of their achievement and cherishing the party's historical image, KDNP awarded the Barankovics memorial medal to the still living former DNP MPs.²²⁹

Sándor Keresztes, a former DNP MP and chairman of the Áron Márton Association (founded in 1988) became the KDNP's first chairman “*on historical rights*” and embodying the party's historical identity. However, having grown up in a different social realm than the party's veterans, the younger generation within the KDNP, called for a more powerful political role and more intense focus on contemporary issues, urged the transformation of the party and the wished to modernize the party's image as well.²³⁰ The generation change within the party took place between the parliamentary elections and the local government elections. At the KDNP's 2nd national convention on 23 April 1990, László Surján was elected as chairman. Fellow chairmen János Birkás, Tamás Lukács and Miklós Pálos represented the younger generation while the fourth co-chairman, former DNP MP László Varga embodied historical and legal continuity.

The party's leaders realized as early as after the 1990 elections that albeit the historical party image is necessary for establishing the party's identity, it is insufficient in itself for

²²⁵ Letter of Dzsingisz Gábor to the KDNP board. 15 April 1990. MNL OL P2246 Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 3 (Box 8) Letters of various persons to Zoltán K. Kovács.

²²⁶ György Szakolczai – Róbert Szabó: Két kísérlet a proletárdiktatúra elhárítására. Barankovics és a DNP 1945–1949; Bibó és a DNP 1956. [Two Attempts to Prevent the Proletarian Dictatorship; Barankovics and the DNP 1945–1949; Bibó and the DNP 1956.] Gondolat Publishing House - István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 2011.

²²⁷ Communist propaganda intentionally confounded the representatives of modern Christian democracy with the Christian party politicians of the Horthy era, denouncing them as “clerical reactionaries.” They were exposed to various forms of retaliation: in less serious cases, they were considered politically unreliable and monitoring records were kept of them by the state security organs, but several others were imprisoned, sent to detention camps or became victims of show trials. Career opportunities were limited for them even after the consolidation period. Former DNP members living in emigration were in the crosshairs of the political police, too. They were categorized in the records as enemies or persons to be defamed or to be roped in. Even in the years of the political system change, the Hungarian secret service actively monitored the activities of the Áron Márton Association, the party organizing efforts of Sándor Keresztes, and they prepared reports on recruitment conventions. State security records discovered to date provide information on 32 representatives. Electronically recorded data are not available for research yet. Cf. Gábor Tabajdi: Kereszténydemokraták a pártállami diktatúra idején. [Christian Democrats in a Time of State-Party Dictatorship] In 70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt. [The Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary.] Op.cit. pp. 49-87.

²²⁸ Pál Marik: Istennel a hazáért és a szabadságért. Hazánkért. [With God for the Homeland and Liberty. For our Homeland.] 30 September 1989. MNL OL. Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32) Documents on activities in the KDNP.

²²⁹ Finally, only two one-time DNP representatives became MP's in the new parliament of 1990. Sándor Keresztes in the KDNP and László Kovács as a member of the FKGP. Róbert Szabó – György Szakolczai: A magyar keresztény politika nagy kísérlete. III. rész. A kádári konszolidáció, a képviselők sorsa és a csekély elismerés. [A Great Endeavour of Hungarian Christian Politics. Part 3. Consolidation in the Kádár Era, Subsequent Life of MPs and Little Recognition]. Egyházfórum [Church Forum] 2010. Year 25, Issue 4-5, pp. 36-46.

²³⁰ Cf. Having examined the careers of politicians, András Bozóki and Gergely Karácsony identified the presence of three distinct generations within the KDNP in the 1989-1990 period: First, the great old-timers who entered the political area in 1945–1948 and were exposed to either moderate or severe persecution; Second, those who were born in the 1930s, were raised in Catholic grammar schools but began their professional careers in the 1950s and third, the generation born after World War II. Cf. András Bozóki – Gergely Karácsony: Életút és politika: a kerekasztal tárgyalások résztvevői. [Lives and Politics: The Participants of Roundtable Negotiations] In: A rendszerváltás foratókönyve. Kerekasztal tárgyalások 1989-ben. Alkotmányos forradalom. Tanulmányok. [The Script of the Political System Change. Roundtable Negotiations in 1989. A Constitutional Revolution. Studies.] Volume 7, p. 362.

achieving that goal. “*You cannot rely on past merits twice*” wrote Miklós Hasznos, leader of the party’s election office at the time in his report to the board, adding that “*Now it is solely the party’s current and future conduct, image and activities that will determine whether this party will become a domestic political force that lives up to the weight and dignity of European Christian democracy.*”²³¹ It was certainly election success for the KDNP that they became coalition partners in the Antall government. However, the power relations between the MDF, the FKgP and the KDNP also raised concerns that KDNP would become a “*satellite party*” or simply a “*party representing the church*” in the shadow of the MDF, the “*dominant conservative party.*” In a way, it actually happened.²³² To offset this and to prepare for the potential future weakening of the MDF, the KDNP considered redefining its party image and identity strategy, rethinking their potential functions in society and, in conjunction with that, renewing its political communication.²³³ By 1992, two platforms evolved within the party, each representing a different style of policymaking. Those supporting a reserved party identity believed that the party’s image of a “*modest party*” should not be changed or only in very small steps, while the more radical platform called for a more distinctive political presence and a stronger own identity.²³⁴ Referring to the problems emerging within the MDF and the weakening position of the Antall government the latter group challenged the stability of the contemporary political landscape and urged that the KDNP should break out from the “*grey party*” role as quickly as possible.²³⁵ Although compared to its seats in the parliament, the Christian Democratic People’s Party enjoyed appropriate representation in government throughout the term, the party’s membership believed Hungarian Christian democracy is destined to achieve far more than that. One important factor behind this view was that while the KDNP’s internal and public communication channels did not function smoothly, the stigmatizing strategy of the depressingly dominant opposition press proved to be remarkably successful. In reference to the KDNP’s historical party nature, opposition media often referred to Christian democrats as a “*nostalgia party*”, adding that they played “*a second fiddle*” within the government.

One outstanding accomplishment originating in efforts to modernize the KDNP’s political character was the first congress of Christian democrats in Hungary. Held in Gödöllő between 24 and 26 April 1992, the convention was staged in a very well chosen moment. There were two reasons that made the timing of the congress favourable. First, the event was the peak of a two-year development period and provided an excellent opportunity to

231 Helyzetünk és feladataink. [Status Report and Tasks.] Memo by Miklós Hasznos, leader of the party’s election office. 15 April 1990. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1990.

232 Cf. András Bozóki: A magyar pártok 1991-ben. A pártok belülről. [Hungarian Political Parties in 1991. An Inside View.] MPÉ. op. cit. 1992. Originally, “satellite party” is a technical term in political science, referring to a specific type of parties in non-competing hegemonic party systems as per Santori’s typology. Presumably, this academic term was taken into political discussions from there. It is an academic issue to determine whether the term should be used in a competitive party system or if it only serves a political purpose (mostly stigmatization). Cf. Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1976. In interviews, KDNP politicians expressed different opinions on the “satellite party” adjective. According to Sándor Keresztes, the KDNP became a satellite party of the MDF and György Rubovszky admitted this was true. Zsolt Semjén and Tamás Lukács, however, regarded it as a stigma. Cf. Katalin Lukácsi’s interviews with Tamás Lukács (Budapest, 19 November 2013); with KDNP MP György Rubovszky (Budapest, January 2014); Deputy prime minister Zsolt Semjén (Budapest, 3 March 2014).

233 Cf. György Szakolczai: A kereszténydemokrácia lehetőségei és feladatai a választások után Magyarországon. [Opportunities and Tasks of Christian Democracy After the Elections in Hungary] 12 April 1990. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32) Documents on activities in the KDNP.

234 Cf. A KDNP meghatározó erő lesz. Kongresszus előtti beszélgetés Pálos Miklóssal. [KDNP to Become a Dominant Party. A Pre-Congress Chat with Miklós Pálos] Magyar Hírlap, April 1992. Party documents. Press materials. 1992.

235 Interview with Dr. Terézia Szilágyiné-Császár. Kilépni a szürkeségből. [Stepping Out from Grayness.] Új Magyarország. 23 April 1992.

communicate the success of party organizing.²³⁶ Second, the decrease of the popularity of MDF, the party that won the 1990 elections and formed the government, was already perceivable by then. The congress was showing the signs of the party's image modernization.²³⁷ Presumably, this stemmed from the recognition that an identity element brought along from the past is insufficient for sustained and successful communication to a contemporary audience. In other words, that the party would make a mistake if it only communicated continuity but failed to formulate the message that it is able to adhere quickly and flexibly to the changing political environment.

In respect of the KDNP's image strategy, the Gödöllő congress fulfilled multiple functions simultaneously. Its declared task was to outline the "*Christian democratic vision*". The agenda included items like discussion of technical papers prepared in advance, elaboration of guidelines and theses to lay the foundation for the 1994 election programme and to serve as a compass for the KDNP's parliamentary fraction. As the party's chairman put it in the foreword to the programme theses, the declared objective was to "*enable the KDNP as much as possible to present the unique characteristics of Hungarian Christian democracy*".²³⁸ However, the congress in Gödöllő also fulfilled additional, implicit purposes. First, it was intended to provide an effective reply to negative stereotypes widely echoed in contemporary media. Second, by presenting the party's political direction in a clear-cut manner, it also sent a message to members who expressed dissatisfaction over the MDF's excessive dominance within the governing coalition. Further, the congress was intended to demonstrate that the party "*has arrived to the present from the past*",²³⁹ and, what is more, it is looking into the future. That it is developing dynamically, eligible to govern²⁴⁰, has its own identity, i.e. that it is able to enforce its principles and plans within the coalition while offering a pragmatic and long-term programme at the same time. "*This congress closes a period but it also opens a new one. From this perspective, this three-day conference has been a milestone. The glory days when we stumbled and were uncertain in politics are over*" – said Miklós Pálos, political state secretary at the Prime Minister's Office.²⁴¹ According to the media communication of senior party figures, the KDNP "*has come of age*"²⁴², and as the congress' slogan said, it was able to manage Hungary's matters with "*cool-headed resolve*"²⁴³ and that it was also fit for pursuing "*background diplomacy*" in European Union matters.²⁴⁴

236 Even the *Beszélő* periodical, a paper close to the SZDSZ admitted that the KDNP became a stronger organization. Cf. András W. Nagy: *Kereszténydemokrata kongresszus Gödöllőn*. [A Christian Democratic Congress in Gödöllő] *Beszélő*, Year 4, Issue 18.

237 In an interview, György Hólvényi said that the congress was the KDNP in "peak performance" mode. Cf. Katalin Lukácsi's interview with György Hólvényi, state secretary for church, ethnic minority and civil society relations. Budapest, 27 February 2014.

238 Programme theses of the Gödöllő congress. Foreword by party chairman Dr. László Surján, 1992. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1992.

239 *A múltból a jelenbe és a jövőbe*. [From the Past into the Present and the Future.] Interview with Zoltán K. Kovács on the occasion of the Gödöllő congress. *Heti Magyarország*, 24 April 1992.

240 In an interview to the *Pesti Hírlap* daily, László Surján said that the KDNP would become a genuine election party by 1994. Cf. 1st KDNP Congress Ended. *Pesti Hírlap*, 24 April 1992.

241 *A KDNP meghatározó erő lesz. Kongresszus előtti beszélgetés Pálos Miklóssal*. [KDNP to Become a Dominant Party. A Pre-Congress Chat with Miklós Pálos] *Magyar Hírlap*, 17 April 1992.

242 *A KDNP nagykorú párttá fejlődött*. [KDNP Now a Grown Up Political Party.] *Magyar Hírlap*, April 1992.

243 *Első kongresszusára készül a KDNP. Interjú Surján Lászlóval, a KDNP elnökével*. [KDNP Gets Ready for 1st Congress. Interview with Party Chairman László Surján.] *Új Magyarország*, 18 April 1992, Saturday. Further: *A KDNP higgadt résztvevője a hazai politikai életnek*. [KDNP – A Composed Participant of Hungarian Politics] *Magyar Hírlap*, April 1992.

244 Although the Christian democratic congress in Gödöllő was a successful event even in European terms that also boosted the KDNP's media presence. Ultimately, however, the party was unable to fill the gap created by the MDF's weakening. According to leftist political analysts, the reason of that was the KDNP's inflexible ideological stand and lack of openness that hindered the organization's endeavour to become a modern, European-style centre-right people's party. Cf. Attila Ágh: *Az állóháborútól a mozgóháborúig*. [From a Standstill War to a Moving War.] MPÉ. Op. cit. 1993.

In relation to the event, several materials were prepared for publicity purposes. Two booklets, titled “*Where is the KDNP Going?*” and “*Let’s Learn Christian Democracy!*” were released before the congress already, while two additional publications were released after the event, summing up its key messages. The one titled “*Message of the Congress*”²⁴⁵ summarized the party’s programme theses and was intended to demonstrate the party’s pragmatic approach, professional mindset and eligibility for governing. The document titled “*The Core Principles of the Christian Democratic People’s Party*”²⁴⁶ was designed to clarify the theoretical foundations. The significance of the latter was further increased by the fact that the party’s leadership gained endorsement for it from an unusually wide legitimating base. The “*Core Principles*” were adopted by the Gödöllő congress then the amended version was approved by voting at the 21 November 1992 session of the National Board. This 17-page publication defined the KDNP’s nature as a party, the foundation of its ideas, the factors that made it a people’s party, the characteristic features of its views on society, its political and financial principles. This was a much clearer and more elaborate ideological statement than those made in the glory days of 1989 that typically involved references to the past and were often *ad hoc* in nature.

“This [document] is the foundation of our party’s ideology. It sets the direction for the party’s program. What is more, it sets the standard for practical politics. At the same time, our ideological core principles secure party unity and guarantee that we remain true to ourselves. If we deviated from those principles, we would be abandoning our identity” – as it was underscored in the introduction. Later on the document made it clear that the KDNP expected all members to adopt the core principles and to strive for enforcing them.²⁴⁷

Although the „historical party” element of the party’s identity was obviously sustained in the “*Core principles*”, its significance changed owing to the nature of the document and the strategic change regarding the party’s image. The section titled “*What type of a party is the KDNP?*” describes that the party continues to assume the heritage of the Democratic People’s Party, that it is “*democratic and patriotic*” “*people’s party*”²⁴⁸ that bears a “*firm national character*” – the latter representing a departure from former descriptions. Nevertheless, references to the party’s historical background are limited to the introduction and relate to the historic path of European Christian democracy. “*We Hungarian Christian democrats are proud to have had an outstanding political personality even by European measure, István Barankovics. Still, he and his party, the Democratic People’s Party were denied the opportunity to thrive that Christian democrats in Western Europe were given. Their promising start was broken by the totalitarian dictatorship. Still, the routes remained intact and gave rise to new sprouts. The thoughts of István Barankovics, the ideas of the People’s Party are cherished*

²⁴⁵ Ibid. MPÉ. op. cit. 1993.

²⁴⁶ The Core Principles of the Christian Democratic People’s Party. Party documents. Executive board documents. A 006-7 Hereinafter: Core Principles. The core principles were prepared by the following individuals using the work of Dr. Ferenc Szakál, Dr. László Varga and Zoltán K. Kovács as a basis: Dr. László Varga, Lajos Békefy, Dr. Gyula Boros, László Dessewfy, Dr. Péter Farkas, Dr. György Giczy, Dr. János Goják, Péter Harrach, Dr. Ferenc Inotay, Zoltán K. Kovács, Geyza Krúdy, Miklós Lukáts, József Mózs, Pál Rosdy, István Rózse, Dr. Zsolt Semjén, Dr. Ferenc Szakáll, József Takács and Béla Thurnay. The publisher in charge was KDNP chairman László Surján, editor-in-charge was Zsolt Semjén.

²⁴⁷ Core Principles. op. cit. p. 4.

²⁴⁸ Core Principles. op. cit. p. 5.

*heritage for us that we can bravely rely on. We have incorporated these thoughts and ideas into the KDNP's core principles.*²⁴⁹

Like every political party in those years, the KDNP also made it a point to set up a proprietary foundation. Established on 21 June 1990, the István Barankovics Foundation (hereinafter BIA) has played an important role in verifying that Christian democracy is embedded in both Europe's and Hungary's history. Therefore, we should discuss herein briefly the foundation's merits in operating the KDNP's intellectual background and sustaining its sub-cultural presence. In addition to taking care of traditional foundation chores, the BIA was also active in two other fields up to 1995. First, it organized theory and communication courses and thereby helped the preparation of the party's candidates for parliamentary and local government elections, its county chairmen, board members and local election campaign managers. Second, its programmes played a role in recruiting potential supporters for the party – from an audience comprising mostly intellectuals. In 1991, the foundation staged several informative presentations on topics related to the Christian democratic worldview and history. Still, the regular audience at its “KDNP evenings” staged on Mondays mostly comprised the party's elderly, pensioner members. The organization's core activities gained impetus in the summer of 1992, owing to two reasons. First, that is when the foundation's education consultancy board was established under the leadership of Zoltán K. Kovács. Second, new funding sources opened up for financing the foundation's programmes: from the summer of 1992 and late 1993, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Hanns Seidel Stiftung aided the foundation's activities. All this led to spectacular development, demonstrated among others by the launch of the BIA's book publishing programme.²⁵⁰ In addition to courses similar to training at adult education centres, the István Barankovics Academy of Politics was launched on 24 October 1992, to provide “*higher political education*”. Since the organizers of the academy were of the opinion that “*the KDNP has not yet a place it is entitled to*” in respect of communication with professionals, the main purpose of the initiative was to recruit young blood and to strengthen the party's intellectual base. The invitees to the Saturday morning lecture series of the “*Academy*” intentionally comprised famous lecturers and mostly young, Budapest-based intellectuals who supposedly would not have participated in political events staged by the party. The academy's programme was designed to develop democratic awareness, strengthen civic responsibility and readiness to take action, and to address Christian democratic literacy and Christian public life topics.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Core Principles. op. cit. p. 3.

²⁵⁰ The primary objective of BIA's book publishing programme was to disseminate Christian ideas and political culture, along with the practical knowledge necessary for the effective representation thereof. In the so-called blue book series, the following titles were released: *Kereszténység és demokrácia* (A leányfalui tanulmányi hétvége előadásainak anyaga) [Christianity and Democracy (Study Materials of the Week-end Classes in Leányfalu)]. István Mészáros: *Kimaradt tananyag* [Extra Curricular Knowledge]. I-II. Péter Farkas: *Fenyegetett jövőnk védelmében* [Defending our Threatened Future]. György Gicz: *Lépésváltás* [Step Change]. R. Houben: *Politikai hatalom – keresztény felelősség* [Political Power – Christian Responsibility]. G. Mehnert: *Protestánsok a kereszténydemokráciában*. [Protestants in Christian Democracy] *Demokrácia – kereszténység-humanizmus*. (tanulmánykötet Giesswein Sándorról.) [Democracy – Christian Humanism (Studies on Sándor Giesswein)] *Magyar konzervativizmus*. [Hungarian Conservatism (In cooperation with the Lajos Batthyány Foundation)]. In the “Christianity and Public Life” series, the following books were released among others by early 1995: Zoltán K. Kovács: *A kereszténydemokrácia szellemi gyökerei*. [The Intellectual Roots of Christian Democracy]. Ferenc Szakál: *Let's Study Christian Democracy!* Lajos Békefy: *Hit és politika – protestánsok a kereszténydemokráciában*. [Faith and Politics – Protestants in Christian Democracy] Cf. Zoltán K. Kovács: *The Book Publishing Programme of the Barankovics Foundation*. 8 March 1995. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

²⁵¹ Gábor Bagdy: *A Barankovics Akadémia előzményei és tervei*. [Background and Plans of the Barankovics Academy.] 20 January 1995. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

Through its programmes, the István Barankovics Foundation systematically strove to build ties to organizations of the Christian subculture. It cooperated with e.g. the Youth Christian Democratic Union, the Vilmos Apor Adult Education Centre and the Regnum Marianum Youth Community. While organizing their events, they networked extensively in order to gradually expand their lecturer and audience base.²⁵² They staged a number of memorial events,²⁵³ and lecturers ranged from college and university professors,²⁵⁴ Christian democratic ministry officials to party staff members or senior party personalities. In an interview for Magyar Nemzet daily, Zoltán K. Kovács said that for the KDNP that was “*in a phase of path seeking*” the purpose of offering political training was to ensure that rational considerations enjoy preference over emotional politics. As he recalled, the foundation was named after a Catholic professional with European education and intellect, thus the academy’s choice of name was not incidental, “*because*” – he emphasized – “*even two Christian parties may be worlds apart*”.²⁵⁵

The reference to these worlds apart, i.e. to the difference used by Zoltán K. Kovács was in fact a double reference. First, he pointed out the diversity of Christian political approaches in the era between the two world wars, and the place of Barankovics’s Christian democracy therein. Second, it highlighted the journey of modern Western European Christian Democratic Parties to the people’s party strategy. For the KDNP, it was not only inevitable but also a crucial question for the future how it should position itself in a specific time of history and in the contemporary landscape of European Christian politics.

II. Christian politics on the threshold of a new era: the worldview party

Through its history dating back to *Rerum Novarum*, several trends were spawned within Christian politics, with Christian democracy – a version of political Catholicism – standing out among them. One of its distinctive features is that albeit it mostly relies on Catholic social teaching, it is not simply Catholic politics owing to its inter-confessional nature that overarches different congregations. As opposed to the often paternalistic political approach and practice of several schools of political Catholicism, Christian democracy stands on the foundation of political, social, economic and cultural democracy that is based on natural law. Finally, another distinctive feature of Christian democracy is that even though it

²⁵² In 1993 alone, the BIA organized 90 courses, two thirds of which stretched over multiple days. 3,700 persons received political training at these events. According to the annual report, 102 events were staged in 1994, half of those were two-day or longer events. In the election year, 440 received training. In 1993 and 1994, the foundation contracted 208 and 302 presenters, respectively. Cf. Report by managing director Ferenc Lassányi and training manager György Pintér on the activities of the István Barankovics Foundation. 5 January 1995. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

²⁵³ Presenting the full list for the 1991-95 period is beyond the scope of this paper. As a sample, these were the memorial events of 1993: King St. Stephen memorial celebration at Pannonhalma; In Győr at the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Social People’s Movement launch; At the 50th anniversary of Gyula Glattfelder’s passing in Szeged; In cooperation with the Jacques Maritain Society to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Sándor Giesswein’s passing, in Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár. On the same occasion, BIA organized a Giesswein Conference in cooperation with ELTE University’s Church History Workshop and a series of lectures in cooperation with the Lajos Batthyány Foundation. Cf. The Barankovics Foundation in 1993. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1993.

²⁵⁴ In 1993, the number of presenters doubled compared to the previous year. Four expatriate Hungarian lecturers (e.g. István Muzslay and Rudolf Rezsőházy from the Catholic University of Leuven and Dr. Nándor Németh from the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies) and several members of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops’ Conference held presentations at BIA’s events and trainings. Cf. The Barankovics Foundation in 1993. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1993.

²⁵⁵ A kereszténydemokráciának új utakat kell keresnie. [Christian Democracy Must Seek New Ways.] 28 October 1992. Interview with Zoltán K. Kovács in the Magyar Nemzet daily. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 56 (Box 52). A collection of newspaper articles related to Christian Democracy.

is an ideology inspired by Christianity, the practical politics pursued in its name is emancipated from church influence.²⁵⁶ The historical background in Hungary reflects a similarly diverse picture. While Christian politics between the two world wars mostly comprised political Catholicism characterized by a conservative, church-oriented approach,²⁵⁷ the democratic people's party approach that originated in the reform ideas of the 1930s and took off after World War II strove to distance itself from political Catholicism, this often ultra-conservative approach. In a move to get closer to contemporary Western European Christian democratic approach to politics and society, the KDNP defined its characteristic features as a combination of Christian principles, democracy and the rule of law²⁵⁸. Thus when the KDNP of 1989-90 cited the historical heritage of the Barankovics party, it actually referred to a secular, democracy-compliant way of making politics while being a worldview party. However, after that it was up to the party to update and define the meaning of its worldview party nature in Hungary of the 1990's.

The first element of this worldview party nature was the choice of the party's name. The "*Christian democratic*" attribute that had been removed in 1945 owing to tactical considerations was now taken back, underscoring the party's ideological stand.²⁵⁹ The terms used in the party's communication were another manifestation of the worldview party nature. Describing the phenomena of society and politics, the party documents used terms of neo-Thomism that originated in the Catholic church's social teachings and were also associated with personalist philosophy. Examples of such terms included common good, subsidiarity or personalism. Similarly, the KDNP's diagnosis of the regime in the late Kadar-era also suggested a Christian approach to society. According to that diagnosis, Hungarians were forcefully separated from Christian Europe during the years of Soviet-style socialism but now the country has a historic opportunity to return to its roots and catch up with Western Christian democracy. The chance is there because Hungarian society "*held on to its Christian faith*" and because a political party is now on the scene that will be able to integrate and represent the interests of the faithful masses²⁶⁰ in the new political system. In the first issue of *Hazánkért* [For our Homeland] periodical, Sándor Keresztes described this role as the KDNP's historic mission: "*In this period of transition, the mission of the Christian Democratic*

256 Jenő Gergely: A kereszténydemokrácia Magyarországon. [Christian Democracy in Hungary] *Múltunk*. 2007/3, p. 115. Hereinafter: Gergely. Further: Zoltán K. Kovács: A kereszténydemokrácia útjai I-III. [The Ways of Christian Democracy.] MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 56 (Box 52). A collection of newspaper articles related to Christian Democracy. Hereinafter: Zoltán K. Kovács: The Ways of Christian Democracy.

257 According to Jenő Gergely, Prohászka strove to gain theoretical acceptance for Christian democracy within the Church, while the other lone warrior in the movement's history, Sándor Giesswein made unsuccessful attempts to achieve the same in public life. Gergely. op. cit. p. 123.

258 József Debreczeni: A KDNP meg a „belga kormány”. [The KDNP and the “Belgian” government.] *Magyar Nemzet* daily, 16 December 1995. december 16. In. Id.: Restauráció [Restoration]. Széplalom Publishing House, 1996.

259 The party referenced as the historical predecessor was originally established under the name Christian Democratic People's Party and took up the name Democratic People's Party under István Barankovics's presidency. The re-founded party was mentioned as Christian and Democratic Party in the first documents of the political transition era of the late 1980s; it took up the name Christian Democratic People's Party in 1989. Regarding the choice of name, the following explanations are available: According to Sándor Keresztes, the addition of the “Christian” attribute was necessitated by the fact that another organization, the Magyar Néppárt [Hungarian People's Party] already reserved the “people's party” element. Cf. Letter by Sándor Keresztes to the Executive Board of the Hungarian Democratic Forum dated 26 April 1989. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 3 (box 8). Letters from various personnel to Zoltán K. Kovács. According to a subsequent explanation rendered by Zoltán K. Kovács, both name changes (i.e. by Barankovics and in 1989) had tactical reasons. In the late 1940s, the “Christian” attribute was removed to avoid drawing unnecessary attacks. Vice versa, in 1989, the attribute was taken back owing to the same reason, to indicate clearly the appearance of the Christian democratic thought. Interview with Zoltán K. Kovács in the *Magyar Nemzet* daily. A kereszténydemokráciának új utakat kell keresnie [Christian Democracy Must Seek New Ways]. 28 October 1992. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 56 (Box 52). A collection of newspaper articles related to Christian Democracy. György Szokolczai considered the name change from Christian and Democratic People's Party to Christian Democratic People's Party politically advantageous because, as he believed, it expressed that the party simply applied a political term instead of taking faith into politics. Status assessment by György Szokolczai on 15 August 1989. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 3 (box 8). Letters from various personnel to Zoltán K. Kovács.

260 Domestic policy status assessment by Zoltán K. Kovács. p. 9. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 3 (box 8). Letters from various personnel to Zoltán K. Kovács.

*People's Party*²⁶¹ is to mobilize those segments of society for participation in public life that held on to Christian faith and traditions and were persecuted and oppressed in the past years... Our mission is to get prepared for the long-term duty of integrating the broad spectrum of masses that hold on to European Christian values."²⁶² In his assessment of the situation, Keresztes wrote that the country's moral crisis calls for a "spiritual renewal"²⁶³ and for the restoration of "values proclaimed in the Gospel". Only one worldview party is destined to carry out this task and that party counts on the support of Hungary's Christian society. In an article introducing the KDNP in the 25 June 1989 issue of the *Új Ember* [New Man] weekly, Keresztes said that the party counted on those who were either Christians or were close to Christianity and felt that "the time has come to take action for their principles in public life, too."²⁶⁴ However, the approach that intended to tie the KDNP to the Christian worldview too closely had its opposition within the party. The members of this opposition group believed that it was not possible to make politics "the old way" in 1989, i.e. with a 1947 mindset. According to a memo dated 27 October 1989, the country does not need a party that declares principles. Instead, it needs a party that is actually able to pursue pragmatic policies and considers the international Christian democratic example "that is in the forefront of progress and which it is a privilege to belong to" a point of orientation. The authors were of the opinion that the principles of modern Christian democracy were suitable not only for the faithful but for the non-religious masses as well. They said this approach should be followed also because of the failed strategy of relying on the church in building a remarkable movement and then waiting for other parties' Christians to move over to the KDNP. Further, the situation assessment in the memo pointed out that it was a hazardous mistake to artificially detect too many similarities between 1947 and 1989. The initiators of party modernization were of the opinion that the KDNP of 1989 was in a far more difficult situation than its predecessor. First, because the Hungarian countryside also underwent significant "dechristianization" in the meantime and second, because Christian democrats had to compete with many more opposition parties in 1989 than in 1947. The KDNP must be rendered "an image that reflects the spirit of opening [up to others]... Its public appearance ... must enable opening to more diverse segments of society, to the centre and to other political and social organizations. The party's public actions and representatives must make the impression that this is a modern party that is able to solve the country's current problems." The supporters of modernization were convinced that "This political approach" (represented by Sándor Keresztes – RMK) degrades the KDNP "to the level of a ridiculous micro-party."²⁶⁵

At Opposition Roundtable (Ellenzéki Kerekasztal – EKA) sessions, KDNP delegate György Szakolczai preferred emphasizing the identity elements associated with a modern Christian democratic party. When presenting the KDNP, he first and foremost pointed out

²⁶¹ At that point, the party's name was not changed yet. Cf. letter from György Szakolczai. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32), Documents on activities in the KDNP.

²⁶² The Ten Commandments are the key to our Europism. Discussion with Sándor Keresztes. Hazánkért 1989/1. MNL OL. Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32), Documents on activities in the KDNP.

²⁶³ László Rónay: Lelki restauráció. [Restoring the Soul] *Új Ember*, 12 July 1992.

²⁶⁴ Kereszténydemokrácia a magyar politikai életben [Christian Democracy in Hungarian Politics]. *Új Ember*, 25 June 1989.

²⁶⁵ Review and proposal of tasks and action items. 27 October 1989. The memo was signed by Ferenc Mateovits, chairman of the Baranya County organization; Kovács József, chairman of the Zala County organization; author's of the party programme including György Szakolczai, and two representatives of the youth organization. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (box 32), Documents on activities in the KDNP.

that Christian democrats rely on a mass supporter base that “*national consensus would be difficult to achieve*” without.²⁶⁶ He assured the founders of the roundtable that the KDNP was a “*secular organization*” that did not need recognition by the clergy and that the “*party would firmly reject such recognition anyway*” as it basically contradicts with the nature of Christian democracy. “*This party has always supported the progressive branch of the Christian approach that is characterized by solid social sensibility. It firmly rejected clericalism, direction by the church and conservatism. So we had fierce conflicts with the church in 1947... and we are not striving to become any sort of church party today, either.*”²⁶⁷ Admitting that although the party is closer to the Catholic church than to others owing to historic reasons, he underscored that they always strove to strengthening the party’s interconfessional nature, similarly to the policy of German and Dutch Christian democratic parties after World War II.

Titled “*The Christian Way*”, the KDNP’s 1990 programme envisaged the implementation of a “*human-oriented society*” and a “*state built on the moral law and natural law*”, naming moral renewal as the country’s most important task. The programme left no doubts that the therapy of society’s sickness could start with return to the path “*set by Saint Stephen*” leading Hungary to “*Christianity and Europe*”. Therefore, the KDNP urged the drafting of a constitution that expresses the principles of both Western Christianity and Western Democracy and Hungarian historic and public law traditions. By this, they primarily meant enforcing the principles of Christian state and society organization: the principle of subsidiarity²⁶⁸, the principle of realizing the full potential of the human personality²⁶⁹ and the principle of solidarity²⁷⁰. In the section dealing with practical issues, the party’s programme demanded the termination of “*Marxist and atheist*” influence in schools, the enabling of “*free competition of ideologies*” and the “*free confrontation of ideas*”, the incorporation of Christian ideas into study materials and, in order to improve political culture, the promotion of democracy and participation in public life in education.²⁷¹

In the 1990 campaign, the party’s messages were addressed directly to the faithful population.²⁷² Although research data about target groups were not yet available then, the KDNP’s candidates voiced hopes that Hungarians retained their Christian values even during the years of socialism and that Christian voters make up a sufficiently large supporter base that enables election success for the party. The candidates were convinced that there was tangible demand in Hungarian society for Christian morals and the political representation

²⁶⁶ Script. Session 27 on 4 July. op. cit. p. 500.

²⁶⁷ SZDSZ delegate Bálint Magyar noted that they saw the KDNP as a likeable organization from the Barankovics-school as opposed to representatives of the Mindszenty approach. Imre Mécs noted that instead of a historical party, he would have preferred to see a KALOT-style grassroots organization comprising base communities and Christian youth, an organization that “would have used Barankovics’s name in its mission statement only.” Cf. Script. Op. cit. Ibid. p. 511.

Cf. Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Reference to the principle of subsidiarity in the context of local government operations. Ibid: Chapter III.

²⁶⁹ The concept of personality is present throughout the document. It is discussed extensively in e.g. the chapters “Church and Party” and “We Want Christian Democracy!” Both chapters state that the objective is to establish democracy that is based on “Christian personalism”, an approach that regards human personality as the highest value. Cf. Ibid. Chapter IV. Section 9, p. 2.

²⁷⁰ “The command of charity dictates our fundamental conduct: solidarity. We express solidarity with every man, people, societal or ethnic group and religion that experiences the violation of its right to exist, its personality, liberty or freedom of thought, freedom of expression, conscience and religion. We take action on the side of the poor and the disadvantaged. We reject any form of discrimination between human beings.” Ibid. p. 21

²⁷¹ Ibid. Cf. Chapter 17. Kiművelt emberfőket, nemzeti tudatformálást! [Calling for Educated Citizens and National Awareness], pp. 69-71.

²⁷² A Christian person cannot be indifferent. Interview with Miklós Hasznos at a Pécs campaign rally. Dunántúli Napló 17 March 1990.

thereof.²⁷³ E.g. Miklós Hasznos expressed his stand as follows: “*One thing is for sure: this Hungarian people in the region of the Danube and Tisza rivers have retained their Christian values through 40 years of oppression. This gives the best hope for a healthy new start*”. In a speech before voters at Pásztó,²⁷⁴ Hasznos underscored that the programmes of parties standing up for a political change in 1989-90 were nearly identical and that the KDNP stood out as the only worldview party. “*We also are calling for a multi-party system and for democracy. However, we are the only party with a programme built on the Christian worldview, on the idea of the Christian state in which the purpose of the state is to serve the public good.*” Therefore, the KDNP primarily strives to influence Hungarian politics from a viewpoint based on humanity and solidarity. As the party said, the country’s moral crisis that evolved during the dictatorship “*cannot be resolved with foreign capital*”. During the campaign, the party consistently and intentionally used church terminology and symbols. E.g. they pointed out that election day was actually on the feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady, and that it would also be the birthday of Hungarian democracy. In a speech in his constituency in Miskolc, Tamás Isépy said that in the “*power distribution chaos*” preceding the elections, the KDNP should promote “*the power of love instead of the love of power.*”²⁷⁵

After adding the “worldview party” element to its identity, the KDNP had to realize relatively soon that preserving and reusing 1947-49 patterns would not be sufficient for drawing and integrating masses.²⁷⁶ This realization happened right upon the first elections and later when opinion poll results during the first term came in. The traditional Christian democratic identity conveyed by the party’s “*old timers*” would only be sufficient for a niche party role; it would be unsuitable for drawing young, faithful generations. Only parts of the organizational network of the Catholic subculture that was in place before 1948 survived the decades of socialism.²⁷⁷ Although the organizational network of churches survived and some educational institutions remained capable of passing on worldview basics, of recruiting and cherishing a faithful generation of mostly intellectuals that began reorganizing this subculture in the 1980s, all this proved to be insufficient for bringing on a breakthrough victory at the elections.²⁷⁸ In this respect, the Christian Democratic People’s Party faced a serious dilemma: should it embrace the Christian thought even more and thereby please elderly voters living in the countryside, i.e. the vast majority of the party’s voter base around the 1990 elections. Or, should the party consider Christianity a cultural value, leaving the door open to those who do not actively practice their religion and thereby increasing its aggregating power. In our

²⁷³ According to the results of Miklós Tomka’s subsequent research published in 1991, approximately one million people considered themselves faithful in Hungary. Quoted by: Róbert Szabó: *Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt a rendszerváltás éveiben* [The Christian Democratic People’s Party in the Years of Political Transition]. In: *70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*. [The Christian Democratic People’s Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary.] István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest 2014.

²⁷⁴ Regarding details of the campaign on Nógrád county in 1990, see Katalin Lukácsi’s interview with former KDNP MP Péter Juhász. *Ballassagyarmat*, 14 March 2014.

²⁷⁵ *Az erkölcsi válságot nem lehet külföldi tőkével megoldani*. [A Moral Crisis Cannot be Resolved with Foreign Capital]. *Észak-Magyarország* daily. 20 March 1990.

²⁷⁶ In six different months of 1991, Szonda Ipsos measured KDNP’s ratings between 5 and 7%. Cf. Tibor Závecz: *A pártpreferenciák alakulása 1991-ben* [Change of Political Party Preferences in 1991]. Cf. MPÉ. op. cit. 1993. According to Medián’s research, KDNP’s likeability index varied in the 39-35% range in 1992. Among those who were sure to vote, 5-6% said between March 1990 and 1992 that they would vote for the KDNP. Government parties were considered likeable by older and faithful people. In this research, the average age of KDNP voters was deemed to be 56. Among those respondents who said they would surely vote for the KDNP, 76% were faithful. The same ratio was 62% for the MDF and 60% for the FKGP. Fidesz, KDNP and MDF were slightly more popular among women than among men. The likeability index of the KDNP and the FKGP was higher among people with lower education living in the countryside than among other groups of society. Cf. *Political public opinion in Medián’s research findings*. Ibid.

²⁷⁷ See more about this in Katalin Lukácsi’s interview with Benedictine archabbot Asztrik Várszegi. *Pannonhalma*, 6 February 2014.

²⁷⁸ *Script*. Op. cit. 360. o.

opinion, there was no clear answer to that question. The KDNP continued to pursue dual communication in identity strategy, appearing both as a party that is closely linked to religion and as a Christian democratic party of the Western European school. This may have originated both in tactical considerations and in different approaches co-existing within the party. As we could see, some realized it at a relatively early stage that the worldview party element needs a serious upgrade because, as they said, “*Christian democracy would soon lose ground in Hungary, too, if put excessive emphasis on religiousness.*”²⁷⁹

Endeavours to modernize the KDNP’s worldview party attribute were also present in the communication of the Gödöllő congress in 1992 – an event held to renew the KDNP’s identity strategy. The party definition rendered by Zoltán K. Kovács at the time intended to free the KDNP from restrictive ideological ties: “[*The KDNP*] is a worldview party in the sense that the social teaching of churches is the most important element in its ideological foundation. This does not mean, however, that they are an ideological or religious party. What it means is that they formulate their policies based on Christian values... They are programme party that rests on a worldview and ideological foundation.”²⁸⁰ Miklós Pálos said that in this respect, there is no “Hungarian Christian democratic model”. The KDNP intends to walk the path of Western Christian democracy: “to make the modern world Christian and to make Christianity modern.”²⁸¹ In an interview to the *Heti Magyarország* weekly, chairman László Surján explained that his party cannot be considered a “*devotional association*”.²⁸² The KDNP is an organization that intends to reach out to supporters of policies inspired by Christianity. Faithful people are just as entitled to participate in politics as any other citizen, even though “*there are many who don’t want admit this*” he added.²⁸³

As an obvious result of the April congress, the chapter titled “*The KDNP’s Ideology*”²⁸⁴ in the “Principles” publication issued in November 1992 offered a seven-point definition of what it meant to be a “*worldview party*”. Being more consistent than any previous descriptions, the chapter explained that as a worldview party, the KDNP strives to give answers to social questions that harmonize with Christian values and help people realize their full potential, but at the same time the party stays away from using Christianity for political purposes. Members of the KDNP are deeply convinced that “*fair and honest participation in public life and politics in a Christian spirit was possible*” and that this should be manifested in both the party’s internal life and in the style of its public politics. Regarding the relationship of party and church, the document declared that the KDNP was independent of churches and “*does not accept direction and direct influence*” from the clergy. However, the party respects the autonomy of faithful communities and helps churches fulfil their social functions. Regarding the representation of faithful people, the party’s goal was to “*create equal opportunities for Christian people*” as outlined in “*the message of the congress*”. When

279 Quo vadis, KDNP? Interview with Miklós Pálos in *Magyar Hírlap* daily. 24 April 1992.

280 A múltból a jelenbe és a jövőbe. [From the Past into the Present and the Future.] Interview in the *Heti Magyarország* weekly with Zoltán K. Kovács on the occasion of the Gödöllő congress. *Heti Magyarország*, 24 April 1992.

281 A KDNP meghatározó erő lesz. [KDNP to Become a Dominant Party. A Pre-Congress Chat with Miklós Pálos] *Magyar Hírlap*. April 1992.

282 Első kongresszusára készül a KDNP. [KDNP Gets Ready for 1st Congress. Interview with Party Chairman László Surján.] *Új Magyarország*, 18 April 1992, Saturday.

283 Egy kis párt követeli a létezés jogát [A Small Party Demands Right to Exist]. *Magyar Nemzet*, 25 April 1992.

284 Cf. Core Principles. op. cit. pp. 5-6.

elaborating on the KDNP's church policy programme, the document underscored that *"standing on an ecumenical basis, the party accepts and represents social teaching of churches"* and strives to ensure *"the freedom of church activities serving the whole of society and provide for the conditions thereof, for religious, cultural, educational and social activities alike."*²⁸⁵ The statements reporting on the work of congress sections offer extensive insight into how the party planned to adapt the person-oriented approach into political practice. Miklós Lukáts, leader of the *"Man and society"* section emphasized the debate on state aid to churches. Representing the *"Education section"*, Sándor Tóth focused on introducing moral philosophy as a subject at schools and Miklós Gáspár underscored the harmonization of legislation and Christian values, establishing a closer connection between law and morals.²⁸⁶

Similarly to its predecessor, the party continued to maintain close ties with the Catholic church in its actual operation. However, organizational solutions were developed to strengthen the party's ecumenical nature. The example was taken from the CDU, as the Protestant Workshop of the Christian Democratic People's Party was modelled after its counterpart unit within the CDU. From an identity policy viewpoint, the workshop was intended to demonstrate that the KDNP is not only for Catholics. In 1992, under the leadership of Miklós Lukáts, the KDNP's protestant MPs set up a Protestant Workshop, organized as an intellectual cluster within the party.²⁸⁷ In June 1992, they contacted the leader of CDU's Protestant Office and sent a delegation to the CDU's federal meeting. In addition to promoting the participation of Protestants in public life, the workshop also intended to provide a political alternative to non-Catholic Christians. According to the letter of foundation, the workshop was established on 31 October 1993²⁸⁸ with the objective of *"contributing with evangelical faith"* to the democratization of Hungary's public life and to *"making Hungary European again based on shared Christian values."*²⁸⁹ They built ties to the national leaders of protestant churches and to local congregations. Workshop members came from the KDNP's protestant membership, supporting members, pastors, presbyters and the faithful. The organization received funding from the KDNP's annual budget.²⁹⁰

Changes in the KDNP's electoral support in those years enable a realistic assessment of efforts to create a modern Christian worldview party image. Compared to prior years, the party's ratings did not change significantly in 1992 either, even though the party's communication became more professional.²⁹¹ The KDNP seemed to have locked itself up with

²⁸⁵ A kongresszus üzenete. Ember és társadalom fejezet. [Message of the Congress. Man and Society Chapter.] MPÉ. op. cit. 1993.

²⁸⁶ Section work was reported on in a Pesti Hírlap article. Nem vagyunk biztonságban. [We are not Safe] Pesti Hírlap. April 1992.

²⁸⁷ The KDNP's home page renders another story of re-foundation: The KDNP's Protestant Workshop was founded on the day after the opening worship of the European Protestant Convention held in Budapest on 25 March 1992. In addition to state secretary Miklós Lukáts, in attendance were MPs Ferenc Inotay and József Mózs, Calvinist pastors Gyula Boross and Sándor Tenke, and Lutheran pastor István Rőzse. Cf. <http://kdnp.hu/protestans-muhely> viewed on 28 June 2015.

²⁸⁸ Miklós Lukáts became chairman of the workshop, while Lajos Békefy was general secretary. Vice chairpersons: Gyula Boross, Péter Kádár, Réka Nyitrai, József Takács, Béla Turnay. In 1996, Lukáts Miklós was followed in the chairman seat by dr. György Horkay, a grammar school teacher and chief Calvinist education advisor. From 2010 and 2013, the Protestant workshop was led by László Szászfalvi and Antal Birkás, respectively.

²⁸⁹ Not numbered. Information on the KDNP's Protestant Workshop for communication use. 14 October 1993. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1993.

²⁹⁰ The international relations of the Protestant Workshop are presented in Éva Petrás's study herein.

²⁹¹ According to Medián's research, KDNP's likeability index varied in the 39-35% range in 1992. Among those who were sure to vote, 5-6% said between March 1990 and 1992 that they would vote for the KDNP. Government parties were considered likeable by older and faithful people. In this research, the average age of KDNP voters was deemed to be 56. Among those respondents who said they would surely vote for the KDNP, 76% were faithful. The same ratio was 62% for the MDF and 60% for the FKgP. Fidesz, KDNP and MDF were slightly more popular among women than among men. The likeability index of the KDNP and the FKgP was higher among people with lower education living in the countryside than among other groups of society. Cf. Political public opinion in Medián's research findings. MPÉ about 1992. 1993.

the sub-cultural base of faithful voters.²⁹² Political analyses in the era suggest that the KDNP did not manage to win over potential voters from its crisis-torn coalition partners, the MDF and the FKgP – i.e. parties with an above-average chunk of faithful voters among their supporters. One important factor behind this was that the leftist media made “*Christian*” and “*Christian reigning*” synonyms of right-wing politics, thereby returning to the stigmatization practices of the communist era. Labelling the KDNP as a “*church party*” was intended to prove the “*reactionary*” character of the right-wing government. This ideological label was designed to suggest that the governing coalition strove to restore the long-outdated and undesirable historic times of the Horthy era. This hit especially the KDNP at a sensitive point as the party defined itself a secular, democratic party standing on the foundation of Christian values. At a study weekend organized by the Vilmos Apor Adult Education Centre and the István Barankovics Foundation in August 1993, László Surján devoted his whole presentation to this issue. Titled “*The Christian Way of Making Hungary Successful*”, the transcribed version of the lecture was also published in the September issue of *Hírlevél*. After introducing the worldview basics of Christian participation in public life, Surján criticized the leftist mindset that envisaged “*Christian reigning*” when talking about the Antall government. “*In 1990, moral crisis was mentioned often ... it was also stated that religion may and should have a decisive role in resolving the situation. It is a major disappointment that some perceive all steps into that direction as signs of the churches’ hunger for power. They mention “Christian reigning” disparagingly, while nobody can explain what they actually mean by that term and why anyone should be fearful of it*” – he said. The examples of identity accusations from the left also indicate that identity destruction efforts were a far cry from facts and historical justice. Thus it was not the Horthy era that the KDNP’s politics of memory reached back to, but Hungarian historical tradition after World War II. In the eye of the historic greats referenced by the KDNP, Sándor Giesswein and István Barankovics, the “*Christian*” policy of Horthy era was *false Christian* at best. As contemporaries, they rejected it and their policy was aimed at creating an alternative thereto.²⁹³ The KDNP, as this chapter also intended to confirm, used the adjective “*Christian*” to express their worldview as opposed to a sign of connectedness to the church. The KDNP rejected the accusations pertaining to its identity and although they clearly communicated that the accusations were absurd,²⁹⁴ this was not effective enough to break down the negative stereotypes about the party.

In the spring of 1993, the leadership of the Christian Democratic People’s Party decided about the campaign strategy for the parliamentary elections scheduled for the following year. The proposals about the would-be strategy pointed towards two opposite directions.²⁹⁵ Those who argued for highlighting the party’s worldview said that the KDNP must present itself in the campaign as a dedicated representative of the Christian thought, the

292 Cf. István Schlett: *Stabilizálódás, vagy elbizonytalanodás* [Stabilization or Hesitation]. MPÉ. op. cit. 1993.

293 Cf. Gergely. op. cit. p. 126.

²⁹⁴ To illustrate the functioning of stigmatization, Isépy brought up his own example in one of his speeches in parliament. He recalled that in 1944, he was labelled as a liberal plutocrat from Budapest; Upon his forced relocation in 1952, he was already labelled as a fascist. “If ‘*Christian reigning*’ is identical to the personalist worldview represented by the KDNP, then we should accept this label, as it’d put us in line with European tradition” he continued. Quoted by: Szűcs op. cit. p. 121.

²⁹⁵ Four drafts were prepared in March 1993. Although the party image alternatives were not yet outlined in a crystal clear form, the essence of each core concept appeared in the drafts. The executive board adopted the paper of István Eszes as it represented the image of a European party in the clearest form. Cf. Tenders of applicants to the election campaign manager position. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1993.

“*party of the truthful*” in the world of untruthful politics, the only party fit for representing the faithful, supporting Hungarian Christian movements in neighbouring countries and for promoting recovery from the moral crisis. This strategy focused on countryside areas where traditions were kept and religious morals were preserved, aiming to draw people who were not active regarding politics and did not choose a party yet. The other campaign strategy was intended to build on the image of a European party. Emphasizing the European identity was supposed to serve two purposes: first, to set off the negative stereotypes generated against the KDNP and second, to send the message that while the party is a genuine people’s party, it belongs to everyone, not only to faithful people. In this identity structure, the party would not be a worldview party in a strict sense, but rather present itself to voters as the representative of cultural values rooted in European Christianity. As an additional identity element, the party’s “fitness for governing” was to be highlighted, depicting the party as a rational, pragmatic, professional political force. Apparently campaign strategists were facing the same dilemma that people charged with shaping the KDNP’s party identity had been struggling with since the very beginning: how can the KDNP remain a worldview party and, at the same time, become able to draw support from a wider segment of society beyond the faithful population, to get past niche party votes and become a party with serious coalition potential?

While walking their historical path, Western European Christian democratic parties already gave their own answers to this dilemma. They loosened up their ideological bounds, realizing the orthodox representation thereof would lock them up with a narrow voter base. People’s parties brought a new era in the history of political parties, and, in a broader sense, also in the history of democratic will generation and political representation. By the 1960s, their accomplishments became apparent primarily in Great Britain, France, Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, in respect of both Christian democratic and social democratic people’s parties.²⁹⁶

III. The ways of becoming a people’s party

In the party formation process in Hungarian politics in 1988–1990, the identity strategies of new political parties meant also a choice between different party models as well.²⁹⁷ When the MDF was able to emerge as the most integrative and mobilizing political force, its coalition partners the FKgP undertook to represent the agrarian population as a niche party and the KDNP defined itself as a worldview party of the faithful. At the same time, the “people’s party” element in the KDNP’s name (retained owing to historical reasons and indicating that the KDNP was the successor of DNP, once the biggest opposition party in Hungary’s parliament) suggested that “*the due place of Christian democracy*” in Hungarian politics was way above the 4% limit and the small party status that it meant. Documents from the period of the KDNP’s refoundation indicate that in the beginning the “people’s party”

²⁹⁶ Regarding the historical typology of political parties, see: Zsolt Enyedi–András Körösnéyi: *Pártok és pártrendszerek*. [Political Parties and Party Systems]. Osiris Publishing House, Budapest, 2001. pp. 111-119. Hereinafter: *Parties and Party Systems*.

²⁹⁷ István Schlett: *Stabilizálódás, vagy elbizonytalanodás. A pártok 1992-ben*. [Stabilization or Hesitation. Political Parties in 1992]. MPÉ. op. cit. 1993.

adjective only meant that the party was preparing for playing a dominant role in parliament and for becoming an important political force. According to the founding fathers, the party was bound to do so by the political weight of its political predecessor, the DNP, and the decisive roles of modern Western European parties in their respective countries. The KDNP's results at the first elections fell short of these ambitions which is mostly blamed on the relatively belated start of party organizing. While this late start was undoubtedly one factor²⁹⁸ behind weaker-than-expected election results, in our opinion this relatively poor performance can also be viewed from an identity strategy issue. As discussed above, the party's communication prior to the elections put the worldview party identity into the fore. This led to a party model that steered the KDNP towards small party status, locking them up in a dominantly Catholic subculture. A status assessment dated 12 April 1990 shows that this trend was realized and the drawing of conclusions was urged: *"We have dissipated the opportunity for our party to fulfil the role of a real Christian democratic party and to become a dominant political force."*²⁹⁹ The road to fixing that would lead through the change of the party's *"sociological structure"*, social image, on strengthening the party's base among intellectuals, workers and peasants, and on bringing in young people. Thus these proposals can also be perceived as a shift towards a different party model. Around 1992, this approach seemed to have gained strength. László Surján defined his party as a *"people's party"*, differentiating it from parties linked to specific social classes.³⁰⁰ Retaining the reference to the worldview party nature, other KDNP politicians described the party as a *"people's party standing on a base of Christian ethics."*³⁰¹ The interpretation of *"people's party"* within the KDNP is best illustrated by two drafts that provide an insight into the party's path finding state of mind at the time. The document titled *"Past and Present Coalescing Into One – What Type of a Party is the KDNP?"* describes the KDNP as a *"modern programme party"* that makes policies based on Christian principles, a *"Hungarian people's party with Western background"*, positioning the organization in the political centre as a *"centre party that is free of extremism"*³⁰² The *"Principles"* document mentioned earlier describes the party as a *"people's party with a patriotic mindset"*. In that approach, the KDNP is not a party of a specific social class or segment, but a party that strives to implement a social and economic structure that provides favourable conditions *"for all people, all human communities and social classes and professions"*. The party does not accept the *"distinctive priority"* of any person, group or class over others. Instead, it shall do its best to equally represent and serve all social groups and its membership is open to any group or segment of society.³⁰³ Thus at the level of political

²⁹⁸ The circumstances of the party's launch are discussed in detail in: Szabó Róbert: A Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt a rendszerváltás éveiben (1989-1990) [The Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) in the Years of Political Transition] In: 70 éves a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt. [The Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 70th Anniversary.] Op. cit. pp. 87-111. and Katalin Lukácsi: Negyedszázados évfordulóját ünnepli a Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt. I-II-III. rész. [Christian Democratic People's Party Celebrates 25th Anniversary. Part I-II-III] <http://barankovics.hu/cikk/idoszeru/negyedszazados-evfordulojat-unnepli-a-keresztenydemokrata-neppart> Viewed on 20 June 2015.

²⁹⁹ György Szokolczai: A kereszténydemokrácia lehetőségei és feladatai a választások után Magyarországon [Post-Election Opportunities and Tasks of Christian Democracy in Hungary]. p. 10. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32) Documents on activities in the KDNP.

³⁰⁰ Első kongresszusára készül a KDNP. Interjú Surján Lászlóval, a KDNP elnökével. [KDNP Gets Ready for 1st Congress. Interview with Party Chairman László Surján.] Új Magyarország, 18 April 1992. Party documents. Press materials. 1992.

³⁰¹ Cf. A KDNP higgadt résztvevője a hazai politikai életnek [KDNP – A Composed Participant of Hungarian Politics]. Magyar Hírlap, April 1992. Egy kis párt követeli a létezés jogát. [A Small Party Demands Right to Exist]. Magyar Nemzet, 25 April 1992.

³⁰² A proof-read version of "What type of a party is the KDNP?" Year not indicated; Presumably from the spring of 1992. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1992.

³⁰³ A keresztény humanizmus, demokrácia és igazságosság útján. Alapelveink. [On the Way of Christian Humanism, Democracy and Justice. Our Core Principles.] Party documents. Executive board documents. p. 9. 1992.

thought, the party already opened to people's party strategies, but the practical implementation of that approach was not successful.

The alternative way of becoming a people's party led through the KDNP's alliance policy. The first opportunity emerged relatively soon, already in the phase of party organizing. Its basis was the orientation to Christian democratic values in the thinking of other political groups formed at the time. One such overlap was with the Christian democratic wing of the MDF. Albeit this group mostly consisted of specialized professionals who emerged as a new breed of politicians during the roundtable negotiations. On an imaginary political map, their social and cultural backgrounds would have placed them much closer to the middle generations in the KDNP and the FKgP than to the MDF's founders.³⁰⁴ MDF members defined themselves as Christian democratic already upon the change of political regime³⁰⁵ and later set up the Christian Democratic Circle within the MDF. In part, the FKgP also conveyed a Christian democratic character. Further, the voter bases of the one-time DNP and the FKgP were also close to each other. This historic fact was a motivating factor behind the party refoundation wave of 1989. These three parties formulated their own identities using national values as a benchmark which was another connecting factor. There were additional considerations that inspired the potential creation of an integrative political organization. Initially, József Antall was more at home in the world of historical parties that were about to be refounded than in the realm of opposition parties. He did not think it was a good approach that the newly emerging political parties begin to define themselves along the gap marked by the folk versus urban debate. He believed this phenomenon originated in the fact that opposition movements were established by intellectuals and not politicians. To him, the folk versus urban debate was more of a "coffee house" matter than a party politics question, thus he strove to get this gap bridged. His concept envisaged a party system for Hungary that would follow modern Western European examples and include centre left and centre right parties alike, with people's parties playing a dominant role.³⁰⁶ His political vision was a modern centre-right party that mirror Germany's CDU. Historical continuity was important for him, and out of all historical parties, he regarded only the FKgP and the KDNP as "legitimate successors".³⁰⁷ Antall's ultimate goal was to create a pragmatic people's party with a Christian democratic worldview orientation – just like in Western Europe. He described this plan at the MDF's 1st National Convention in March 1989 as follows: "If we are unable to bundle the centrist forces of the folk movement, parliamentary democracy and agrarian democracy with worldview-inspired trends manifested in Christian democracy, we will be unworthy of respect from the world and from our successors."³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ The MDF's founders were mostly Calvinist while the panel of experts brought together by Antall mostly comprised descendants of middle-class civil servant families. E.g. István Balsai, László Salamon, István Balázs, Iván Szabó, Géza Jeszenszky, Ákos Péter Bod. Cf. Script. VII. op. cit. p. 381.

³⁰⁵ Cf. László Salamon said in an interview: "I keep saying that I am a Christian democratic politician. Had I waited a few more weeks with the decision [on which party to join], I may have joined the KDNP. I remember reading the news that the KDNP was re-founded, roughly one week after I joined the MDF." Cf. Csanád Nagypál's interview with László Salamon in June 1997. Quoted by: Script. Op. cit. VII: p. 412.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Iván Bába: Rendszerváltoztatás Magyarországon. [Change of the Political System in Hungary.] Veritas 2014. p. 169.

³⁰⁷ Cf. József Debreczeni: A miniszterelnök. [The Prime Minister.] Osiris. 1998. Hereinafter: The Prime Minister. pp. 41-44. In Antall's opinion, the novelty of the Barankovics party was that as opposed to other types of political Catholicism, the DNP also incorporated national liberal traditions into its political thinking. That is why Antall viewed the DNP's successor, KDNP an appropriate partner for creating a centre-right party. Cf. Szűcs. *ibid.* p. 185.

³⁰⁸ Quoted by Szűcs. op. cit.: p. 239. Antall described his own worldview as the sum of these ideas: "I am a liberal Christian democrat, committed to the nation and believing in a unified Europe... If you leave out any of the elements, the definition will no longer apply." Quoted by Debreczeni. op. cit. p. 143. In a

From the autumn of 1988 to that of 1989³⁰⁹, József Antall was seeking the possible combinations of a broad “*national integration*”. His endeavour was made easier by his close ties to the FKgP’s historical wing and to the KDNP’s organizers, plus he was a member of the Áron Márton Society and the MDF alike.³¹⁰ What is more, it was an actual possibility for some time that Antall would lead the KDNP. In the spring of 1989, he not only attended KDNP organizing committee sessions but in March he was requested by the body to be the party’s leader. He responded to the request with a long (nearly four-page) letter³¹¹ dated May 6, outlining his political views in detail along with his concept relating to a future Christian democratic party. Backing up his views, he reviewed the possible paths that the KDNP could follow in the attachment to the letter, titled “*Pro Memoria*”.³¹² Thus with the accuracy so characteristic of him, Antall outlined the essential and worldview-related identity elements of a Christian democratic party that he could undertake to lead.³¹³ Christian democratic ideas fully fit his people’s party concept: “*It is obvious that beside social democracy, [Christian democracy] is the biggest trend*”.³¹⁴ However, Antall made it very clear in both documents that only German and Dutch model of Christian democracy is an acceptable form of worldview-based politics for him. Contrary to these models, he firmly rejected the Belgian model and that applied by the CSU, describing them as “*narrow-minded*” Christian democratic solutions. For Antall’s political taste, even the KDNP’s predecessor, the party of Barankovics was not as “*firmly open interconfessionally*” as the CDU – the party that he considered the benchmark. Antall believed that the objective was not the creation of Catholic party with a few Protestants and some non-faithful supporters, but rather to establish a genuine, integrating people’s party. The Christian democratic party in Antall’s vision would not simply be the legal successor of the Barankovics party, but a new political unit created from various sources.³¹⁵ As the KDNP was strongly focusing on defining itself as a historical party at the time, the precondition set by Antall was unacceptable for them, but Christian democratic leaders interpreted his reply as a rejection anyway, as they considered the condition impossible to fulfil.³¹⁶ Thus the concept of a people’s party to emerge on the KDNP’s basis was taken off the agenda relatively quickly.

subsequent memoir, he spoke about his endeavours upon the change of the political system as follows: “These three political forces must be brought together, that’s what I believed was the way of alignment to the European party structure, and I obsessively held on to this view back then already... so there should be a centre-left party and a centre-right party, too.” Judit Oskó: Antall József. Kései memoár. Publikálatlan írások. [József Antall. A Belated Memoir. Unpublished Writings.] Corvina. 2013. p. 212. Hereinafter: Belated Memoir.

³⁰⁹ He was elected as MDF’s president in October 1989.

³¹⁰ Only fragmented information is available on the relations between the three parties. On behalf of the MDF’s leaders in a letter dated 5 April 1989, Zoltán Bíró greeted the KDNP organizing committee, expressing his confidence that the “movement, after defining its identity” would strengthen the political unity that existed between the two groups. Further, he proposed that the MDF executive board and the KDNP’s re-founders should set up a joint committee to harmonize activities. Cf. Documents of Sándor Keresztes at the Hungarian National Archives. In his response letter dated 26 April 1989, on behalf of the KDNP’s organizers, Sándor Keresztes expressed “solidarity” with the MDF’s activities but did not address Bíró’s specific proposal. Cf. *Ibid.* In a letter to his friends in June, Zoltán K. Kovács mentioned that they received an informal offer from the MDF that they should join that party and get “limited autonomy” there, which he did not consider timely. Cf. Zoltán K. Kovács’s letter to friends dated 12 June 1989. p. 4. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32) Documents on activities in the KDNP.

³¹¹ Response letter from József Antall to the KDNP’s request. Documents of Sándor Keresztes at the Hungarian National Archives. Hereinafter: Antall’s response letter.

³¹² József Antall: Pro memoria about Christian democratic alternatives in Hungary (page 5). 5 May 1989. Documents of Sándor Keresztes at the Hungarian National Archives. (Under sorting.) Hereinafter: Pro memoria

³¹³ In a subsequent memoir, he said the following about this: “When the Christian democratic People’s Party decided in the spring to transform into a party from the Áron Márton Society, I was one of those whom they invited to the general secretary position. I attended a few of their sessions and outlined my views, that I have a centre party in mind. If the small holders’ party becomes unsuitable for that, the Christian democratic [party] must be set up in a way that holds these organizations together in one unit. ... I scrutinized the Christian Democratic People’s party, too, seeing whether we can transform them into something like that, but [having seen them] I developed doubts. I wrote down all this, so they have it in writing and I have it in writing. These are historical documents describing my plans.” Belated memoir. op. cit. p. 210.

³¹⁴ Pro memoria op. cit. p. 3.

³¹⁵ Antall’s concept in relation to Christian democracy is also outlined in: The Prime Minister. op. cit. pp. 43-44. According to the author, the Christian democrats took the reply as a rejection.

³¹⁶ Antall “responded negatively” to KDNP’s March invitation – wrote Zoltán K. Kovács to his friends. Cf. The Prime Minister. op. cit. p. 44.

In a report to friends dated 12 June 1989, Zoltán K. Kovács wrote there was not enough time “to establish a joint party organization that would unite Christian democratic voters coming from different directions”. In his letter he also referred to the stand that party organizers communicated to Antall, namely that they “wish to continue to build and develop the KDNP without compromises for the time being”.³¹⁷ However, Zoltán K. Kovács thought it was important to set up a “single election front”, to harmonize strategies and to have the MDF, the FKgP and the KDNP prepare in cooperation for integrating groups of society that “hold on to European values”. He believed the leaders of the respective parties realized that this was a “task of historical significance”.³¹⁸

Antall, too, strove to prevent the disintegration of national and Christian forces. He expected that political groups that organized themselves vigorously would reject calls for unity because, as he put it, they “overestimated themselves”. Therefore, as a temporary solution, he even regarded a “French-type party alliance” as a realistic alternative to the people’s party concept should the large centre party “not seem feasible”.³¹⁹ Harmonization talks between the MDF, the KDNP, the FKgP and the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Society were underway through the summer after the MDF board authorized Antall to initiate the creation of an inter-party coordination committee.³²⁰ The status assessment by the subsequent prime minister warns that parties of national orientation should be aware of the hazard of “decaying themselves”. To avoid that trap, he recommended a distribution of duties as opposed to his former suggestion of party mergers: “In the political life that is unfolding now, it is of outstanding importance that centre parties find each other and create an alliance... It is untenable however if newly formed political organizations that stand on the same basis do not reach out to each other ... they stand on identical or related ideological foundations, but they could rely on different social groups at the elections. The MDF is primarily an organization for intellectuals (including senior employees); the FKgP could rely on small entrepreneurs in regions and cities and on people who hold on to traditions, while the Christian Democratic People’s Party could count on faithful masses, middle classes and pensioners, etc. Thus the alliance could have multiple roots” (emphasis added – KMR).³²¹ The distribution of roles outlined in the document set the KDNP on a journey that subsequently proved to be an inescapable path, drifting the party towards niche party status. That was just the opposite path that the successful European Christian democratic parties walked after World War II, during the evolution to people’s party status.

Compared to expectations, the election results in 1994 were a disappointment³²², providing an opportunity to the KDNP to renew its identity. Not just because they had to

317 Cf. Letter from Zoltán K. Kovács to friends, dated 12 June 1989. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32) Documents on activities in the KDNP. “Sándor (Sándor Keresztes – RMK) wanted him to take sides with us” – he wrote, referring to Antall, and added: “However, Antall was intentionally preparing for a kind of an integrative role, aiming to combine Christians from the Smallholders’ Party, from the MDF and from the KDNP alike. He has a new party or party alliance in mind. He made a written proposal about that in writing.” Ibid.

318 Zoltán K. Kovács’s report to his friends about the situation in Hungary. 6 September 1989. p. 10. MNL OL P2246 Heritage of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41 (Box 32) Documents on activities in the KDNP.

319 Pro memoria. op. cit.: p. 5.

320 Letter from József Antall to Sándor Keresztes, dated 5 July 1989. Documents of Sándor Keresztes at the Hungarian National Archives.

321 Status assessment letter from József Antall to the members of the party alliance. 4 July 1989. Documents of Sándor Keresztes at the Hungarian National Archives. p. 4.

322 The executive board was of the opinion that the political side to which the party belongs “suffered disastrous defeat”, voting was independent of the capabilities of candidates, it was purely based on emotions and the party could not achieve a breakthrough and reach beyond its regular voters. Cf. KDNP executive board session. 9 May 1994. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1994. “We are stunned but remained standing” – responded László Varga in an article dated 30 May 1994, analyzing the situation after the elections. Varga condemned scapegoat-seeking within the party and proposed renewed

adapt to the new situation and get a grip on their opposition role, but also because they got out of the overwhelming embrace of the big brother party. Thus an opportunity opened for them to get over the role enforced on the KDNP by the much larger MDF.³²³ Many believed that György Giczy's arrival would help see through the change of character that could transform the Christian Democratic People's Party from a niche party into a genuine people's party.

The KDNP had to develop its new strategy of self definition in an era when Hungary's party system was undergoing realignment. As a result, a ternary party structure took shape. Beside the left-wing government coalition, the centre right was taken by the MDF (and later the MDP, a party formed by former MDF members) and FIDESZ who repositioned themselves to that field. The far-right was taken by the FKgP who were drifting there and by the ethno-radical MIÉP [Part of Hungarian Life and Justice]. In essence, this process meant that nearly all parties were forced to reiterate their identity. When György Giczy took the helm with his programme of strengthening the KDNP's own image in January 1995, it was still undecided where the KDNP would place itself between the centre-right and far-right of the political spectrum.

The starting point of the new presidency's thinking in early 1995 was that the KDNP had been unable to represent an independent Christian democratic stand and thus the party needed more cautious alliance policy to build and preserve a clear-cut image. The main driver behind this concept was the desire to avoid repeated marginalization. That is, to prevent that the KDNP "*would be used again by other parties for their own purposes*". According to the new strategy, the same distance must be held towards each opposition party, leaving the door open to any solution and thereby functioning as a "bridge" or "*decisive factor*" on the political right.³²⁴ In this respect, the decision to participate or not in the Civic Alliance initiated by the FIDESZ was the most serious for the party to date. The idea of the alliance stemmed from the recognition that only a fully-fledged alliance of opposition parties could have a chance against the leftist Horn government at the upcoming elections. Naturally, the creation of an opposition alliance also conveyed the possibility of a merger, pointing towards a people's party scenario. The KDNP's chairman and his supporters had reservations regarding the initiative right from the beginning. "*The KDNP would really become dull if it chose to take on the greyness of FIDESZ instead of that of the MDF*" they said, expressing concerns that the

party-building efforts instead. Cf. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1994. In an analysis that disagrees with the overall disappointment with the party, Péter Pintér, the chairman of the Financial Controlling Committee, pointed out that voices lamenting the KDNP's fall were wrong. The fall of the government left the KDNP almost unscathed, although it could have hurt the party severely. Despite having been part of the government, the KDNP's significance did not diminish. Cf. Assessment of election results and further work of our party. 28 May 1994. Ibid.

³²³ Miklós Gáspár rendered a radical assessment of the party's recent past in a subsequent interview to the Magyar Fórum paper, in an effort to legitimize Giczy-style independence policies: He claimed that the KDNP had no characteristic image between 1990 and 1994. Neither the party nor its parliamentary faction participated sufficiently in drafting laws, "the received those in final form from the government". The reason, as Gáspár claimed, was that this is exactly what the government needed: "Surján's grey, faceless policies." The KDNP's programme was only allowed in government policies if it harmonized with the MDF's programme. Thus the two parties did not complement each other in government and parliamentary work. The Christian democrats were rather needed to improve vote ratios. This setup was definitely damaging for the KDNP because it did not allow the proper representation of its specific ideological characteristics. While the faction's majority was content with Surján's political style, the rest of the party leaned towards a firmer approach that represented the real KDNP. This fact was also reflected in Giczy's election as party chairman. Cf. Magyar Fórum. Akikre számíthatunk. Interjú Gáspár Miklóssal. [Who we can count on. Interview with Miklós Gáspár.] 30 January 1997. Party documents. Press material. 1997.

³²⁴ They thought the required background work for that could be achieved through strengthening the expert panel working for the party. According to Tibor Füzessy, the biggest gap they inherited related to the party's professional background. He believed the faction was not sufficiently professional either for representing the party with proper statements and interviews. Cf. Minutes of a joint session of the party and the faction held at the MP office block. 17 May 1995. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

party would lose its *“sovereign image announced in January”* and that the KDNP would simply be a *“fig leaf”* in the Civic Alliance.³²⁵ In the summer of 1995, the National Board issued an official opinion on the party’s alliance policy. While admitting that defeating the Horn government would only be possible if all opposition parties join forces and therefore deemed cooperation at lower levels necessary, they did not think the time had come for establishing a joint top unit. Further, the official opinion also stated that the use of adjectives indicating the identity elements of various parties, e.g. *“civic, people’s party, Christian democratic, social, liberal, conservative”* [in the name of the would-be alliance] is of *“exclusionary nature.”*³²⁶ Not everyone agreed with this alliance policy approach within the party, voicing concerns that this strategy would exclude the KDNP from a four-party alliance that was just taking shape. The party’s parliamentary faction not only supported professional cooperation among the four parties – they also called for political cooperation.³²⁷ According to the faction, the name *“four-party alliance”* did not matter, but Giczy firmly rejected that opinion: *“I will not put up with this [stand]. Names and descriptions do matter! Anyone who ever dealt with communication knows that a name is also a business card. If the KDNP once declares that it intends to be the party of Hungary’s non-existent civic population in the form of an alliance, it must drop “people’s party” from its name. I am very sorry that the parliamentary faction does not know this.”*³²⁸ The decision on which alliance policy alternative the party should pursue was to be made by the National Board Session of 11 November 1995. The status assessment speech of György Giczy at the session made it very clear that the chairman wanted to subordinate the party’s alliance policy to the higher cause of creating a strong KDNP image: *“In January, I was elected by the National Board Session because they wanted to give me two years for building the party’s independence, strength and public character, and that is what I committed to do. I will not undertake under any circumstances to take the party into an alliance that will, for good, dissipate the possibility of implementing Christian democracy in Hungary.”*³²⁹ Envoys supporting him also believed that the Civic Alliance would hinder the KDNP’s efforts to develop its own image. They said that although at the time of the Antall government, Christian democrats *“made the sacrifice”* of subordinating their own interests to the national conservative government, but the situation was different then. Now they are only willing to accept conditions as equal parties. They said the Civic Alliance is the forerunner of a new party in which the KDNP’s weight would not be sufficient yet, thus joining the alliance would be too early for them. Opponents within the party criticised the executive board’s overly cautious approach, regarded the alliance as indispensable specifically because they did not think the KDNP was strong enough. In their opinion, the party’s actual *“shuttlecock policy”* would not even take to the party into parliament in the next elections. As faction leader Tamás put it: *“The ‘never-ever, not anywhere and with nobody’ approach will not bring on opposition*

³²⁵ Miklós Gáspár’s comments in the debate over alliance at the National Executive Board session held on 16 September 1995. In his assessment, FIDESZ was not reliable as *“one and a half years earlier they were still in the liberal alliance... MDF is under the burden of their previous term in government”* and the FKgP was unfit owing to Torgyán. Both poles aimed at lining up the KDNP on their side, but only for a fig leaf role. Cf. Minutes of the National Executive Board session held on 16 September 1995. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

³²⁶ Stance of the KDNP’s National Executive Board regarding alliance policy. 3 June 1995. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

³²⁷ Draft resolution of the KDNP’s parliamentary faction for the November 1995 session of the National Board. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1995.

³²⁸ Minutes of the National Board Session of the Christian Democratic People’s Party held at the party headquarters on 11 November 1995. Documents of National Board sessions. Minutes. 1995.

³²⁹ Ibid.

alliance by 1998”, albeit the alliance was necessary for right-wing success. Still, supporters of the “*shuttlecock policy*” gained majority at the National Board Session, thus the KDNP did not agree to formally join an alliance but confirmed that the cooperation of opposition forces was necessary. The Board resolution on the party’s alliance policy declared that professional and tactical harmonization among opposition parties is possible in Parliament, at local level and in local governments, but this should not mean political alliance under any circumstances, let alone a party alliance. In the course of joint work, KDNP politicians should “*strive to be the bridge [to other parties] while preserving the party’s independent image and strengthening its ideological firmness*”.³³⁰ László Surján explained this decision to the public saying that Christian democrats “*did not want to link themselves up with other parties again without clarifying up front the objective of the alliance*”.³³¹ With the 11 November decision, the National Board actually torpedoed the plan of creating a Civic Alliance. This indicated that Giczy and his supporters gained strength within the party.

The alternative path of alliance policy was to cooperate with the FKgP led by József Torgyán, a party with peaking popularity at the time thanks to their radical and populist policy. This alternative was competing with the FIDESZ initiative. Although Torgyán was viewed from within the KDNP as a very divisive personality and there were suspicions that FKgP intended to “*swallow*” [i.e. merge] the KDNP just like FIDESZ, several arguments supported cooperation with them. The FKgP’s traditional voters were very close to the Christian democratic party’s base. Therefore, as the party chairman put it, “*you obviously do not want to risk these people’s implicit support for our party*”.³³² The “*historical party*” identity element also pointed towards the FKgP: owing to its past, the KDNP was closer connected to the smallholders’ party than to FIDESZ, a new party that just came across from the other side of the political spectrum. Further, the party chairman regarded Torgyán as a successful politician. This was not an insignificant factor. The FKgP rejoiced over the failure of the Civic Alliance initiative that they had a very poor opinion of anyway. They considered it a sign of their growing influence that the KDNP “*could not be dragged into the trap set up by Iván Szabó and Viktor Orbán*”.³³³ FKgP politicians also envisaged a ternary party structure in Hungary. However, in their mind one side would comprise the left with MSZP and SZDSZ, the other side would comprise the “*liberal parties*” of MDF and FIDESZ, and the third pole would consist of “*parties with a historical and national commitment*”, that is FKgP and KDNP. A disturbing factor to this concept was the widening opinion gap within the KDNP regarding the issue of alliance with the smallholders’ party. Therefore, Torgyán chose to treat one wing of Christian democrats as quasi allies while attacking others on an ongoing basis.³³⁴ When doubts arose within the KDNP about Torgyán and his populist style, György Giczy wiped off reservations saying that the bad image of the FKgP leader is actually generated by liberals and

³³⁰ KDNP National Board resolution on the party’s alliance policy. 11 November 1995. OV 682/95 Party documents. National Board documents 1995. The executive board issued a resolution on implementing the National Board decision on alliance policy, regulating the political conduct of party organizations. Accordingly, local, county-level and central organizations were forbidden to sign agreements on political alliances, only ad-hoc cooperation was allowed in some cases. Resolution of the Executive Board of the Christian Democratic People’s Party. 29 November 1995.

³³¹ Policies of government coalition and opposition parties in 1995. MPÉ. op. cit. 1996.

³³² Interview with György Giczy. Demokrata. 1 November 1996. Party documents. Press materials.

³³³ Cf. Ágnes Maczó – Ilián G. Nagy: A tévedés folytatása. [Continuing a Mistake.] MPÉ. op. cit. 1995.

³³⁴ László Surján: A kormánykoalíciós és ellenzéki pártpolitika 1995-ben. [Policies of government coalition and opposition parties in 1995.] MPÉ. op. cit. 1996.

serves their interests: *“Let us not allow a liberal party (FIDESZ – RMK) tell us who is an extremist in this country... The KDNP can decide about that on its own.”*³³⁵

Thus in this period of re-formulating its identity, the Christian Democratic People’s Party found itself in a political field where it apparently had to choose between a centre right or a radical-populist alliance alternative. First, the party responded by not joining either the Civic Alliance inspired by the FIDESZ or the National Alliance offered by Torgyán.³³⁶ Instead, they attempted to preserve their identity and function as a bridge balancing in between the two. Over time, however, Giczy’s executive board, with their mandates confirmed on 14 December 1996, clearly gravitated towards the FKgP.³³⁷ The strategy of the Giczy–Füzessy–Gáspár–Hasznos–Pálos team (with growing support from party bureaucracy and members) was based on reevaluating the KDNP through a procrastinating strategy. When this strategy failed, they were seeking a balancing role between the MIÉP and the FKgP. The Latorcai–Surján–Isépy wing, however, strove to keep the party in the “Europe-compliant and civic” alliance.³³⁸

In a sharp contrast with its former identity, the KDNP also became a “quarrelling” party. In the eye of the public, they lost their virtue of keeping their inner conflicts to themselves. Perceiving the unfavourable change, Sándor Keresztes also warned that *“there is a risk that the party may lose the trust of those who expect a lot from the party’s ideological stand.”*³³⁹ The disagreements that surfaced from the spring of 1995 were getting much graver by then through a number of conflicts. We do not feel compelled to review the party’s inner crisis from a political history viewpoint. Herein we only take account of the key milestones of internal confrontations in 1996-1997, discussed extensively in the press at the time. Such conflicts included e.g. the debate over the person of the faction chairman in February 1996³⁴⁰ and the clash at the National Board session convened to discuss the issue of democracy within the party and amending the party’s statutes in March that year. At the 8 June 1996 National Board session, the inner opposition of the Giczy-wing managed to get Tibor Füzessy’s executive chairman position terminated by majority vote.³⁴¹ The campaign for the party chairman position in relation to the upcoming party elections took a start in October already, supplying another reason for a sharp manifestation of differing opinions. Although the National Board Session convened for 14-15 December 1996 repeatedly confirmed Giczy’s mandate as party chairman, Tamás Isépy and others initiated a lawsuit, challenging the

³³⁵ Minutes of the National Board Session of the Christian Democratic People’s Party held at the party headquarters on 11 November 1995. Documents of National Board Sessions. Minutes. 1995.

³³⁶ In that period, Torgyán simply referred to the KDNP on multiple occasions as “the sweet child of my party”, rendering a true picture of the subordination plans he had in mind. However, none of the Christian democrats protested, even though this statement, as aptly pointed out by a commenter, already allocated the KDNP’s “seat at the family table”. Cf. Lapozó. 10-17 December 1996.

³³⁷ The Torgyán-oriented approach was approved in a National Board resolution on 24 October 1997.

³³⁸ Vendetta. 168 óra weekly. 22 July 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997.

³³⁹ Minutes of the 8-9 June 1996 session of the KDNP’s National Board. Party documents. National Board documents. Minutes. 1996.

³⁴⁰ The differences of opinion with the faction led by Tamás Isépy spurred party chairman Giczy to run for the faction leader position in February 1996. The attempt failed. One of Giczy’s supporters, Miklós Hasznos explained this as follows: opponents of the party’s policy gained majority within the faction, they split the party into two and if the chairman would become faction leader, “order would be restored”. Tibor Füzessy was of the opinion that faction leader Tamás Isépy is in a “confusion of roles.” Giczy’s opposition rejected his attempt as multi-jobbing. “We must demonstrate that this is not a one-man party” – said Zoltán K. Kovács in the debate, while László Varga believed the developments were driven by managing chairman Füzessy’s hunger for power. Cf. Minutes of the National Executive Board session of the Christian Democratic People’s Party held on 10 February 1996. Party documents. Executive board documents.

³⁴¹ On 9 March 1996, the KDNP’s national executive board nominated managing chairman Tibor Füzessy to the position of deputy speaker at parliament. Cf. Minutes of the National Board’s extraordinary session held on 3 March 1996. Party documents. National Board documents. Minutes. 1996. This step was perceived by the internal opposition as a successful move to neutralize Tibor Füzessy.

legitimacy of convening the body that elected Giczy and that of the decisions made at that forum.³⁴² This step opened an endless row of lawsuits in the party. After KDNP leaders clashed with the EUCD in the spring of 1997, a confrontation evolved that led to the party's foreclosure from the international Christian democratic organization by July. In hindsight, that confrontation proved to be disastrous for the party.³⁴³ On 28 April 1997, the opposition of the Giczy wing called on the chairman to resign owing to his unfitness for leadership. However, the National Board Session convened again to elect party official on 21 June 1997 repeatedly brought success for György Giczy. True, the legality of circumstances was disputable again.³⁴⁴ The showdown was triggered by a series of resolutions from the party's ethical committee, ordering the exclusion of "rebel" members³⁴⁵ from the party. The opponents of the party's executive board responded to that with exclusions from the parliamentary faction, using the reputation damage generated by the KDNP's exclusion from the international Christian democratic organization. Finally, the series of these events led to the termination of the KDNP's parliamentary faction.³⁴⁶

The developments unfolding within the KDNP from May 1995 led to the generation of different and competing identity strategies. Both approaches claimed to be representing the real Christian democracy, accusing the other side of deviating from Christian democratic traditions and identity, attempting to stigmatize them. As these strategies were taking shape, "unity was getting further and further away instead of coming closer". Both sides admitted that

³⁴² The internal opposition group's nominee for party chairman was János Latorcai, chairman of the National Board at the time. In that capacity, he scheduled the party elections for 18 January 1997. However, the National Executive Board changed that date referring to a point in the statutes that entitled the National Executive Board to convene the National Board if 20% of the members thereof so request. Executive board members in attendance rejected the 18 January 1997 date set by János Latorcai with 10 yes votes, 15 no votes and 2 members abstained. Cf. Minutes of the National Executive Board session held on 19 October 1996. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1996. This situation spawned an interpretation debate between the two sides on the statutes. In the lawsuit that followed, on 7 January 1997, the Court of Budapest annulled executive board resolution on convening the KDNP's National Board and all resolutions passed at the body's re-election meeting held in December. This also applied to György Giczy's confirmation as chairman that had been voted by 158 of the 252 members at the December board meeting. Cf. Minutes of the KDNP National Board's 13th session, 14-15 December 1996. Party documents. National Board documents. 1996. The party's leaders appealed the court ruling on grounds that the court's decision only observed the plaintiff's arguments and neglected the numerous evidences and opposite opinions submitted by the party. Cf. Zoltán Bassola party prosecutor's appeal to the Superior Court. Party documents. Executive board documents. The party's next legal representative, Gábor Jobbágyi supplemented the appeal in August, arguing that the court failed to notice that the minority within the party who lost the votes communicated their defeat as a legal one and now strive to achieve legal victory that can convert back to political victory. Cf. Supplementary appeal to revise the previous court ruling, submitted to the Superior Court by Gábor Jobbágyi on 22 August 1997. The Superior Court's ruling on 29 April 1997 confirmed the Budapest Court's decision, declaring that by convening the national board, the party's chairman exercised a right that was beyond the scope of his mandate and took away the rightful duty of another party official. Lawsuit documents. Party documents. Executive Board documents. 1997.

³⁴³ In the spring of 1997, EUCD chairman Wim van Velzen said that after the exclusion of FKGP from the organization earlier, the KDNP's exclusion may also take place unless the party changes its alliance policy that gravitates it towards right wing extremist parties (the anti-Semitic MIÉP and the strongly populist FKGP). The KDNP's leaders were of the opinion that the EUCD interferes too deeply with member parties' internal matters. Cf. Exclusions. Kurír. 10 March 1997 and György Giczy's interview with the *Heti Délkelet* weekly in March 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997. At the EUCD session held in Bratislava in April 1997, Giczy promised to restore peace within the party and to change its alliance policy. The Hungarian version of his speech, translated from English, was published in the 22 April 1997 issue of the *Kurír* daily. Cf. Party documents. Press materials. 1997. Not seeing any change in the KDNP's policies and citing their sustained relations with the MIÉP as a cause, the EUCD declared on 11 July 1997 that the KDNP "excluded itself" from the international organization.

³⁴⁴ The re-election of officials took place amidst unclear legal circumstances, since the Superior Court announced its final ruling on the legality of the delegation of Pest county representatives to the Board three days later, on 24 June. At the re-election, György Giczy defeated his challenger Zsolt Semjén by 133:102 votes. Semjén was given a vice chairman position. Zsolt Semjén, who announced his running for the post relatively late, was presumably regarded by many as an integrative person who could narrow the gap between the parties' opposite poles. Cf. Mészáros Tamás: A régi új elnök. [The Old New Chairman.] *Tallózó*, 26 June 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997.

³⁴⁵ This was enabled by the amended status. It declared that those who make statements that hazard party unity can be excluded from the KDNP. The Ethics Committee ceased KDNP faction leader Tamás Isépy's membership on 4 July 1997. From then on, Isépy whimsically called himself a "public law nonsense", since no maverick was chairing a parliamentary faction until then. *Tettvágy*. [Desire for Action.] *Magyar Narancs*, 10 July 1997. Party documents. Press materials. By 31 July 1997, László Surján, János Latorcai, András Rapcsák and György Rubovszky were all excluded from the party. Even the exclusion of the party's founder, Sándor Keresztes, was considered. Disciplinary procedures were launched against the other former DNP MP, László Varga. Cf. A fej nélküli lovas. [Headless Horseman.] *Magyar Narancs*, 31 July 1997. Party documents. Press materials 1997.

³⁴⁶ Faction members belonging to the internal opposition to Giczy's politics were of the opinion that exclusion from the EUCD must have consequences in the faction, too. Cf. Memo of the meeting held at the Mongolian restaurant. 14 July 1997. Party documents. On 15 July 1997, the faction changed their statutes, enabling exclusion from the faction with a simple majority vote. Cf. Excerpt from the session of the KDNP's parliamentary faction. 15 July 1997. Party documents. Those in attendance submitted a motion to exclude from the faction Tibor Füzessy, Miklós Pálos, Miklós Gáspár and Miklós Hasznos. The motion was accepted unanimously with 12 supporting votes. Cf. Resolution passed at the extraordinary session of the KDNP's parliamentary faction held on 15 July 1997. As a result, György Giczy, György Fekete and Ferenc Szakáll voluntarily left the faction. At the next meeting of the party's executive board, ten MPs loyal to Giczy also confirmed that they would voluntarily leave the faction. Thus the faction's membership sank from 23 to 13 and the faction was dissolved. Officially, the KDNP's parliamentary faction ceased to exist on 21 July 1997, ten months before the next parliamentary elections.

the unity of the party was broken. The executive board was talking about two wings of the party, about the power centre of the faction. They depicted the National Board as a second executive board, while others cited freedom of opinion within the party and the freedom of platforms. This latter group rejected any limitation of setting alternatives, accusing party leaders of striving to monopolize the party. Looking at the example of other parties that also struggled with internal problems, it was clear that the internal power struggle was a severe threat to the party's moral and political capital. Therefore, in order to avoid the "FKgP's path" [i.e. an endless series of self-destructive internal debates] and "MDF-style schizophrenia"³⁴⁷, a significant number of KDNP members strove to keep internal conflicts confined to the party,³⁴⁸ or at least to communicate the party's power struggles to the press in a more professional way. In the debates, a gap appeared between the party elite that distribute "slots on party lists" and local party leaders who do "grassroots work for the KDNP."³⁴⁹ In the beginning, many delegates in the National Board were of the opinion that countryside units should not contribute to power struggles in Budapest. Those who realized that internal conflicts deteriorate the party's performance, demanded that instead of immersing in political debates spawned by personal conflicts the party should focus on real party work, on the challenges faced by Hungary and on creating a party headquarters³⁵⁰ that cooperates effectively with countryside units. However, the membership of countryside organizations also took sides with the warring factions of the party elite.

Conflicts between the participants of the debate were manifested both in the realm of political pragmatism and in political ideologies. Regarding the former, opinions differed about what actions were necessary and realistic in the party's alliance policy. However, it also became obvious that the background ideologies and political values driving the politicians of this worldview party also differed, i.e. that the players of the conflict interpreted Christian democracy differently. These different starting points led to various status assessments and solution alternatives. Ultimately, two dominant opinion streams evolved, supporting two models of party identity.

According to Miklós Pálos and Miklós Hasznos, two supporters of Giczy's policies, one side was a "conservative line that insisted on fundamental [values]" and represented Christian democracy in a more radical form, while the other side was a "leftist line" that strove to appear more "compliant", yet if the KDNP was to accept their approach it would be "drifted in between the three other parties (FIDESZ-MDF-MDNP – author's note) that have nothing to do with Christian democracy and conservatism."³⁵¹ Giczy's side viewed the other side as liberals and labelled them accordingly in their communication to party members. At the extraordinary National Board Session convened in March 1996, the chairman stated in his speech that he did not intend to cooperate with "liberals, socialists, communists and coups

³⁴⁷ The split of the MDF faction became a reality on 2 March 1996. The power struggles in the FKgP began during the Antall government already.

³⁴⁸ Minutes of the KDNP National Executive Board session held on 10 February 1996. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1996.

³⁴⁹ Comments of Hódmezővásárhely mayor András Rapcsák in the debate. Minutes of the KDNP National Board's extraordinary session held on 2 March 1996. Party documents. Minutes of National Board sessions. 1996.

³⁵⁰ Minutes of the KDNP National Executive Board session held on 10 February 1996. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1996.

³⁵¹ Minutes of the KDNP National Board's 13th session on 14-15 December 1996. Party documents. National Board documents. 1996.

d'état supporters in the party."³⁵² In an interview to the Demokrata weekly in late autumn he mentioned that unfavourable developments were unfolding within the party and named the influx of liberalism as the greatest threat to the KDNP: "There are entities in Hungary who want to see liberalism in a dominant position in Hungary on both sides – both on the political left and right. They obviously see that I am not a partner in this endeavour, but others may sign up to these political plans easily."³⁵³ Tamás Isépy, one notable representative of Giczy's opposition, pointed out: "It is a tragedy that e.g. the term "liberal" has become more or less of a synonym for plague-stricken. Germany's CDU proudly represent the liberal traditions in German history. And what do we do? Should we eradicate the 19th century from our history, along with such greats as Deák, Kossuth and Eötvös? I am not willing to deny that in the 19th century it was liberalism that shaped the idea of Christian personalism, along with unconditional respect for man, human freedom and dignity into political will and had them manifested in laws."³⁵⁴

In the dimensions of political thinking, the opponents of the executive board were of the opinion that the party diverted from the route set by Barankovics' heritage and therefore, the "enforcement of the principles of Christian democracy was at stake."³⁵⁵ In the spring of 1997, Tamás Isépy wrote an extensive article for the *Új Magyarország* daily to prove this premise,³⁵⁶ saying that the objective of the so-called minority side is to create a practical, "moderate Christian democratic party of the European type," similar to Germany's CDU–CSU. They claimed that the other side was obsessed with power and was riding the wave of social dissatisfaction with populist slogans and fancy rhetoric in an attempt to win the confidence of waters, neglecting the fact that one cannot govern with promises. In Isépy's definition, being a people's party means that the party does not commit itself to serve a specific social class or pressure group, but strives to address the entire society instead. This is definitely impossible for a party that prefers "sameness over diversity, exclusion over inclusion", issues "fulmination charters" condemning those who think differently and names their departure from the party an indispensable precondition to the party's purification. As Isépy wrote, subsidiarity within the party was also damaged and got transformed into the same kind of "democratic centralism" that used to characterize the single ruling party of the socialist era, where the will of the central presidency was the only valid dogma that brings salvation and where compliance with the statutes is needless and the mandates of others can be revoked freely. Isépy concluded that the KDNP's official definition of itself was more and more contrary to the legacy of Hungarian Christian democracy. A statement issued by honorary chairman

³⁵² László Varga described this as "indictment". Those concerned rejected the accusations and referred to rights provided for in the statutes. "There is no coup. What is happening is not a coup but a right provided by the statutes. Changing the statutes is not a coup but addressing the problem... In a democratic party, there is room for a minority opinion as well." Cf.: Minutes of the National Board session held in March 1996. Party documents. National Board documents. 1996.

³⁵³ Interview with György Giczy. In *Demokrata*. 1 November 1996. This kind of stigmatization of opponents appears on multiple occasions in the political communication of the era. E.g. After losing the lawsuit, the chairman said the following: "We do not need post-communists and liberals in our party, therefore we decided to submit an appeal." Cf. *Új Magyarország*, 10 January 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997. Only István Csurka used stronger language when criticizing the Christian democratic opposition of the FKgP–KDNP–MIÉP right wing alliance. He blamed the KDNP's crisis on "undercover traitors in the party, contractors of liberal circles" holding them responsible for the party's division. He added the FIDESZ leaders are especially liable because they took the lead in "coordinating disorganization, generating hostilities and exclusion". Statement by MIÉP dated 23 April about the KDNP's having been dragged through the mire. In *Magyar Fórum*. 30 April 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997.

³⁵⁴ Hát mit tegyek még? [What More Should I Do?] Interview with Tamás Isépy. In *Magyar Narancs*, 10 April 1997.

³⁵⁵ Kard és kereszt. [Sword and Cross] Interview with Tamás Isépy. In *Reform*, 1997. Issue 2.

³⁵⁶ Tamás Isépy: Néhány gondolat a KDNP válságáról. [A few Thoughts on the KDNP's Crisis.] In *Új Magyarország*. 30 May 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997.

Sándor Keresztes echoed a very similar opinion, stating that the KDNP was no longer the moderate and constructive opposition party that he founded upon the change of the political system.³⁵⁷ A group of the party's founding members from the countryside also called for active intervention from the party's doyens, warning "*honorary chairman Dr. Sándor Keresztes, Dr. László Varga MP and Zoltán K. Kovács political-opinion journalist*" that "*the time has come for protecting the people's party heritage*" and to return the party to the "*path set by Barankovics*".³⁵⁸ One important trigger for this public statement by the founders was that the Catholic Church repeatedly expressed their growing disapproval of the party's internal struggles.³⁵⁹

The party's departure from the Christian democratic path set by Barankovics seemed to have been confirmed by the radical statements of the KDNP's chairman that were reminiscent of the FKgP's populist political style, and the party's increasingly tight ties to not only the smallholders' party but to MIÉP³⁶⁰ as well. In the public eye, these developments suggested that the KDNP was flirting with the far-right. The Christian Democratic Party that traditionally followed moderate politics now attempted to convert tensions into political capital. These tensions were generated in Hungarian society by strict austerity measures known as the "Bokros package", named after the finance minister who developed them. Presumably, the reason behind this manoeuvre was György Giczy's realization of the fact that [FKgP chairman] Torgyán successfully exploited widespread public dissatisfaction. Giczy made several radical statements, an indication that "*he, too, developed a desire for populism*". However, he was late with that because the masses that were becoming increasingly radical were already integrated into the FKgP's supporter base by that party's demagogue politics.³⁶¹ Like Isépy, László Surján also considered this approach contradictory to the core values of Christian democracy. What is more, he called them dangerous. In his opinion, "*the road that the KDNP embarked on is not the road of Christian democratic values. Referring to the expected radicalization owing to social dissatisfaction, he said that "Hungary is like a dry forest, where those who team up with the far right are actually playing with a box of matches."*³⁶² Surján declared that the KDNP had to make a choice between the local equivalents of Le Pen and Kohl, i.e. István Csurka and Viktor Orbán.³⁶³ He and his supporters viewed Giczy's policies as an attempt to steer the KDNP on "*Torgyán's way*", and they did not only regard the party's shift to the right as being contradictory to their values and therefore being

³⁵⁷ Lesz még meglepetés. [Surprises are not Over yet] In 168 óra. 25 February 1997.

³⁵⁸ Kereszténydemokrata Futár. [Christian Democratic Courier] Special issue (not dated). Party documents. Press materials. The party's veterans attempted to mediate between the sides on multiple occasions and only decided to launch the Barankovics Platform after the failure of the mediation attempts. According to an article dated August 1977, the platform was created by Sándor Keresztes (other sources name László Varga) under the party's trademark name. Cf. Kereszt, vagy amit akartok. [Cross, or what you will] In HVG, August 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1996. The platform was banned by the executive board, but the opposition side decided in July 1997 to transform the Barankovics platform into an association, as it was banned unlawfully. Cf. Memo of the meeting held in the Mongolian restaurant. 14 July 1997. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1997.

³⁵⁹ In the summer of 1997, Bishop Endre Gyulay called on the KDNP to delete "Christian" from its name. In response, György Giczy declared: "Whether a party uses the Christian adjective in its name or not is none of the Catholic church's business. The church declared a thousand times that they do not get engaged in politics. That it does not interfere with any party's internal affairs. The church should focus on religious life. At the same time, the KDNP is the party that represents all the values of the church. So there is no reason to blame each other. However, it saddens me that the other side appropriated the bishop's letter, because it was not addressed to György Giczy but to Hungarian Christian democracy and to both sides." Cf. Keresztút. [Stations of the Cross] 22 July 1997. In 168 óra.

³⁶⁰ At the October 1996 session of the National Executive Board, the chairman announced that he did not want to exclude MIÉP from cooperation between the parties. However, they did not want to enter into an alliance with the Hungarian Democratic People's Party (MDNP) that was established in the meantime. Cf. 19 October 1996. Minutes of the National Executive Board session. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1996.

³⁶¹ Radikálisok és mérsékelték belháborúja. [An Internal war Between Radicals and Moderates] In Magyar Nemzet, 19 August 1996.

³⁶² Vendetta. In 168 óra, 22 July 1997.

³⁶³ László Surján: A balkányar vége felé. [Approaching the End of the Left Turn] In Magyar Nemzet. April 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997.

unacceptable, but they also thought such policies would generate very little political benefits. Isépy saw this very clearly when he emphasized that *“there is no room left on the right side of the right wing. You can take sixty thousand people to the streets with a far-right political programme, but I think higher than that of Hungarian citizens.”*³⁶⁴ According to Giczy’s critics, this new style of loud and radical populism did not suit the KDNP’s image. They thought the party should rather focus on programme creation and that Giczy’s frequently quoted motto that *“the KDNP only intends to enter into an alliance with the miserably poor Hungarian people”* is a hollow slogan since all parties hunt votes. They identified themselves as supporters of the practical approach and described their opponents as a side operating with clichés meant for effect: *“One side is practical, even though this term now has a negative connotation. I would call the other side “rhetorical”. What do I mean by that? If we want more than just winning the elections, if we also want to govern after that, then we must come up with a feasible programme.... However, if we announce a programme that is a quasi wish list, i.e. if it exactly matches what some voters want to hear, then I call this approach “rhetorical.”*³⁶⁵

In terms of down-to-earth political practice, the opposition’s biggest problem with party leaders was that the steps in their policies did not harmonize with proclaimed objectives and that the party’s over-emphasized independence will be a barrier to overturning the Horn government: *“The chairman set the overturning of the Horn government as the party’s objective. At the same time, by making a series of contradictory statements, he annihilated the cooperation of opposition parties that could lead to the accomplishment of that objective. An election alliance of KDNP-FIDESZ MPP- FIDESZ Hungarian Civic Party - and MDF, with open doors towards the FKgP, could be easily regulated in detail and could lead to absolute majority in 1998. Yet the chairman called FIDESZ a “parasitic party”, made disparaging remarks of the MDF and called for cooperation on a broad spectrum spanning from MIÉP to [Imre] Pozsgay. This not only indicates a lack of knowledge regarding election laws but also made the party look unreliable and unpredictable.”*³⁶⁶ However, the party’s leaders declared that the main practical objective should be to retain the KDNP’s independence. In their opinion, this independence came to existence when the party *“stepped out of the MDF’s shadow in 1995.”* According to Gáspár, the situation seen during the first government term [after 1990], i.e. that the KDNP was *“washed underneath the MDF”* could not happen again.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Diary, 28 December 1997. “It is beautiful rhetoric to say that we strive for broad opposition unity encompassing everyone from MIÉP to Pozsgay. But for God’s sake, it does not work like that. We cannot pick flowers from a part of the opposition field that somebody else already fenced off. From the area where MIÉP and the FKgP planted seeds. We have our territory in that opposition field but we allowed other parties to occupy it: the Catholic bishops’ council is holding joint events with Fidesz. I simply cannot comprehend why Füzessy and his associates do not perceive that.” Said Isépy to Magyar Narancs. *Hát mit tegyek még? [What Else Shall I Do?]* Interview with Tamás Isépy. In Magyar Narancs, 10 April 1997.

³⁶⁵ Christian democracy is not identical to either Giczy or Latorcai. Interview with Tamás Isépy. In Kapu. 5 March 1997.

³⁶⁶ Letter from the opposition to György Giczy dated 28 April 1997, calling for his resignation. Party documents. In essence, the same thought is repeated in the 14 MP’s statement on 12 May 1997, inspired not least by the fact that Giczy failed to respond to the letter calling for his resignation. According to the statement, with a “sense of mission that is eligible to be called wry” and with a “rigid rejection of opposite opinions”, Giczy managed to divide and destroy the party that used to be united, while also “annihilating centre-right cooperation and not intending to return to the democratic and successful path of Barankovics.” Statement of the 14 MPs on 12 May. Party documents. 1997

³⁶⁷ *Tovább a megkezdett úton. [Proceeding on the Way We Have Chosen.]* Interview with Miklós Gáspár. In Kapu. 5 March 1997. Miklós Pálós left no doubts about the magnitude of the liberal threat when noting that in his opinion internal conflicts within the KDNP were fuelled from outside the party: “I am fully convinced that the conflicts have been fuelled from the outside... Only the blind do not see that it is a well devised, secret game.” What will be Your Fate, KDNP? As seen by Miklós Pálós MP. In Ez a Hét. 29 March 1997. Party documents. Press materials. 1997.

This conflict in the practical dimensions also manifested in the operation of democracy within the party, as the parties accused each other of violating democratic principles. Giczy's side referred to the principle of majority. As National Board Sessions consistently confirmed the chairman in his position, he and his supporters were convinced that the problem originated in the fact that *"a political minority is unable to accept the majority decision in line with democratic rules."*³⁶⁸ Their opponents, however, argued that owing to the violations committed by him, the party's chairman became ineligible for leading the party. They claimed that the party is operated under hands-on control and that the party affairs are managed in a way that *"suggests dictatorship"*. Listing charges they said that *"the executive board declared that different opinions are allowed within the party, yet the board passed a resolution prohibiting the Barankovics platform. At the national board session, five minutes are allocated to a report on policies and 45 minutes are spent on fabricating internal enemies and on a showdown with them. At the meetings of executive bodies, more energy is devoted to personnel issues than to political ones."*³⁶⁹ The 14 MPs sharing this view issued a statement in May, declaring that they *"cannot and do not want to follow"* that party chairman's *"crisscross ways that are a far cry from path of Christian democracy."*³⁷⁰

A countryside delegate at the National Board Session in March 1996 proved to be a visionary as he predicted the outcome of the conflict within the party as follows:

*"In politics, there is struggle among parties and within parties. The latter is the more difficult one. In our party, there are two approaches: radical right wing and modern conservative, both with an equal number of supporters. Persons took sides with either of these and this is the source of the power struggle. Great politicians are characterized by the ability to integrate and not to push others to the side... the winning side will feel good, but the party will not achieve 5% (referring to threshold to parliament – KMR) after a decision that expels half of the party's membership. If we join the radical nationalists, half the party will quit."*³⁷¹

The KDNP was unable to get over the opposition dilemmas of the second parliamentary term. The gaps within the party led to a split. As a consequence, the party lost its parliamentary faction 10 months before the 1998 elections. On 30 August 1997, the group opposing György Giczy's stance founded the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance (Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség, hereinafter MKDSZ) and passed the organization's statutes on the same day. The deed of foundation declared that the alliance's objective was to cherish the traditions of Hungarian and European Christian democracy and to mediate that to society. According the organization's mission statement, *"by making use of the intellectual and political heritage of István Barankovics, a leading figure of Hungarian Christian democracy"*, the MKDSZ wishes to be a cooperating partner of organizations that *"are committed to democracy, possess a European background and focus on representing Christian and national*

³⁶⁸ Tovább a megkezdett úton. [Proceeding on the Way We Have Chosen.] Interview with Miklós Gáspár. In Kapu. 5 March 1997.

³⁶⁹ Letter from the opposition to György Giczy dated 28 April 1997, calling for his resignation. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1997.

³⁷⁰ Statement of the 14 MPs on 12 May. Party documents. Executive board documents. 1997.

³⁷¹ Cf. Minutes of the National Board's extraordinary session on 3 March 1996. Party documents. National Board documents. Minutes. 1996.

values.” The inaugural session elected László Surján as chairman of the MKDSZ and issued a statement underscoring the importance of cooperation between political forces with a similar mindset.³⁷² The alliance elaborated on its objectives in a document titled *“Healthy society, balanced growth”*. The document was a quasi election programme and it was published before the campaign start for the 1998 elections.³⁷³ In October 1997, the MKDSZ signed an agreement with FIDESZ MPP, pursuant to which several of its members obtained a parliamentary mandate at the 1998 elections as Fidesz-MPP representatives. Thus the KDNP under Giczy’s leadership embarked on the 1998 elections without allies and their results were catastrophic. The party lost parliamentary representation for over two terms.

This study examined the identity strategies that defined the KDNP’s image. With a view to the sources we used for this work, we could mostly reconstruct these based on the underlying elite strategies. When looking at a party’s identity, it would be not less important to review the social and cultural background of its members, along with their political culture. However, that exercise would exceed the scope of this paper. Thus in the final part that is also an outlook, we briefly review the opinion of MKDSZ members of the KDNP’s alliance policy that had caused so many problems within the party. On 1 June 1998, MKDSZ chairman László Surján sent out a questionnaire to the association’s members, aimed at surveying their *“views on the chance of creating a party in Hungary that is similar to Germany’s CDU in terms of political stance and power.”*³⁷⁴ According to our calculations, submitted replies represented the views of nearly 10% of members.³⁷⁵ Out of 266 respondents, 156 believed that a *“union party”* should be established immediately, i.e. before the upcoming local government elections, practically as an alliance of participating parties and organizations. 146 of these respondents thought that alternatively, this alliance could also be established in the first half of 1999. 166 were of the opinion that in the long run, the merger of participating organizations into a single party was necessary and preferred over a loose alliance of parties. The questionnaire also inquired about which parties the members would welcome to an alliance or to a merged centre-right party. These replies reflected well the political preferences of members.

The preferences of the 266 surveyed MKDSZ members concerning the parties that should participate in a would-be right-wing alliance were as follows:

³⁷² Statutes of the MKDSZ. MKDSZ documents. Party documents. 1997. The first national convention of the organization was held in the month of foundation already, in Győr on 30 August 1997.

³⁷³ Objectives of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance. Budapest, 1998. Party documents. MKDSZ documents. 1998.

³⁷⁴ MKDSZ questionnaires. Quantity: 266. As far as we know, the questionnaires have not been processed systematically before. In relation to our research, quantitative data processing was performed by Katalin Lukácsi while qualitative data were analyzed by the author. The questionnaire comprised the following questions: Is it timely to establish a union of centre-right parties before the local government elections? If not, can the union be set up in the first half of 1999? Is it worth establishing a new political organization in the second half of the term? Would you welcome a real union (one party, one board)? If not, do you think an alliance is the right solution (joint candidates, multiple parties)? Should members of the current organizations automatically receive membership in the union? If not, would you welcome an “admittance committee”? Do you think a union with the FKgP is possible? Is cooperation based on treaties a good solution or only a back-up solution? Should the union’s founding statement contain specific core principles? Party documents. MKDSZ documents. 1998.

³⁷⁵ According to the members’ registry found among party documents, the alliance had 2,583 members at the time. Counties with outstanding membership numbers were as follows: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (518), Budapest (464), Csongrád (193), Veszprém (185), Nógrád (158), Győr-Moson-Sopron (131) and Pest (114). Party documents. MKDSZ documents. 1998. We did not find information on the methods of data collection. Presumably the sampling procedure was not fully in line with opinion polling rules. Therefore, in a strict sense, collected data cannot be considered representative. At the same time, a population of 266 is thought to reflect the opinion of more members than that, since many respondents indicated that they returned a joint opinion of their respective local organizations.

	1 st place	2 nd place	3 rd place	4 th place	5 th place	Should not be in	None/ Invalid answer
Fidesz-MPP	90	35	32	12	3	3	91
MKDSZ	90	80	6	1	2	0	87
MDF	0	54	106	15	5	0	86
MDNP	18	7	25	91	21	16	88
KDNP	1	6	28	23	40	79	89

As shown above, 90 respondents put the alliance of MKDSZ and FIDESZ as their top preference. However, a different opinion also existed, calling for the MKDSZ to operate as a platform of FIDESZ instead of an independent party, and thereby ensure their Christian democratic orientation from the inside. Others were of the opinion that once the turnaround of FIDESZ is seen through, there would be no need for a stand-alone Christian party and “*only the emphases would be different*” [between centre right parties]. Another sign of the dramatic reshuffling of power relations on the right was that by the time of the survey, i.e. 1998, none of the respondents mentioned the MDF in the first place. This was a radical change, considering that the MDF was the KDNP’s one-time coalition partner and mentioning them in the first place would have meant that they were considered eligible for union. However, 54 and 106 respondents mentioned them in the second and third place respectively, while the prestige of an MDF spin-off, the MDNP [Magyar Demokrata Néppárt - Hungarian Democratic People’s Party], was quite low as most respondents ranked them in the fourth place. The FKgP, a once important player in Giczy’s former alliance policy, was only considered eligible (if mentioned at all under “*other proposals*”) without Torgyán. A total of 98 respondents mentioned the KDNP as a potential ally. Still, as shown in the table above, most of them marked the party as their 3rd, 4th or 5th preference. Even these respondents added the explanation that they would only consider the KDNP eligible under new leadership. As one respondent noted, “*We have a different interpretation of Christian democracy than these people* (the KDNP executive board – RMK). *Consequently, we do not have to belong to the same organization.*” It was a recurring comment though that the KDNP’s members should not be abandoned because they were either misled or could not really comprehend and assess the developments owing to their elderly age.

The MKDSZ questionnaire also asked an open question about the principles along which Christian democratic members consider the creation of an integrative centre-right party feasible. 149 explanatory replies were received and now serve as a great source for mapping out the value preferences of MKDSZ members. The answers are characterized by extensive ideological diversity: Proposals on alliance principles and defensible values were on a broad ideological range from national liberalism to traditional conservatism. Naturally, the vast majority of answers called for the representation of Christian democratic principles and the enforcement of solidarity, personality and subsidiarity. Regarding these topics, several practical policy proposals were submitted. They related to e.g. the enforcement of human rights in conjunction with the dignity of individuals and an economic policy that promotes social security. However, a significant number of respondents identified Christian democracy with the principles of national liberalism that they considered key to bourgeois development. Others recommended that the Christian, European and civil values represented by József

Antall should be adopted. Orientation to national values was a dominant principle in the answers and it was often supplemented with proposals regarding European values. Citing European examples was a similarly typical endeavour: many respondents called for the following of the CDU-CSU's example, some went so far as recommending that the party should study the CDU's statutes when elaborating the core principles for a would-be people's party. Conservatism was mentioned less frequently in the texts and mostly as progressive or modern conservatism. However, several short answers were given where the term "*national Christian values*" presumably referred to conservatism in the traditional sense. Albeit the responses reflected ideological diversity, they had one common endeavour: to support a centre-right "*union*" that would be based on equality and the guaranteed representation of Christian democracy.

As revealed by the debate over the desirable way of becoming a genuine people's party and by a qualitative analysis of questionnaires completed by members, the KDNP's identity was never defined in a clear-cut manner that potential followers could decode easily. The identity strategies offered to members were quite diverse. We have shown that the "people's party" identity element did not really refer to a genuine people's party in the political sociology sense, even though the representation of Christian democracy always conveyed the perspective of growing into a people's party. Still, this only seemed attainable via a successful alliance policy. The path finding endeavours presented herein and the internal debates that accompanied them explain why this objective could not be accomplished in the period under review. The shaping of the worldview identity element is partly related to that: the long-time dilemma of "*the faithful and the secular*" in Hungary and the often contradictory interpretations of Barankovics's heritage. Successful European examples of the people's party model were regarded as a benchmark in Hungary and showed that once a [Christian democratic party] steps beyond the narrow worldview party mindset, it can become a stable, integrating force that draws a broad political supporter base. At the same time, we must be aware that the formation of political parties in Hungary was a rather unique process in which Western European examples were not copied on a one-to-one basis. Consequently, it cannot be declared that the only right strategy would be to follow the Western route. It is for sure, however, that a shift from the centre-right to the far right did not serve that cause. This was also indicated by the KDNP's results at the 1998 elections. Far right orientation was never an acceptable option for the KDNP's frequently cited predecessor, the Democratic People's party in 1947. In terms of historical roots, this shift recalled the worst traditions of political Catholicism that is also related to anti-Semitism, something that István Barankovics, the iconic leader of Hungarian Christian democracy fought against throughout his political career, both with his writings and his actions.

The change of direction remained a task for the next generations of KDNP members. However, after the party hit the bottom in 1998, it took years until that change took place. In the meantime, the MKDSZ had to provide a political and organizational platform for those

KDNP members who were disappointed with their party. The party's unity could only be restored in late 2002, pursuant to a ruling by the Superior Court.

ÉVA PETRÁS

THE VOYAGE OF HUNGARIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY TO THE HEART OF EUROPE

I. Underground Currents, 1949–1989

In order to understand the international relations of the Christian Democratic People's Party (Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt – KDNP) after the change of the political system, we must look back to the post-1949 period of party history in Hungary. After the operation of the Democratic People's Party was suspended in 1949, the political representation of Christian democracy was annihilated in Hungary for forty years. Still, thanks to the activities of politicians who were forced to emigrate from Hungary, an international network of contacts and organizational relations evolved in this era, that served as a natural starting point for the re-founded KDNP in establishing its own international relations after 1989.

After a dramatic discussion³⁷⁶ with Mátyás Rákosi, general secretary István Barankovics left Hungary in a vehicle of the US Embassy on 2 February 1949. His wife, plus Jesuit father József Jánosi and authoress Mária Blaskó were travelling with him. After they arrived in Vienna, Barankovics gave an interview to the foreign press and radio stations, announcing the cessation of DNP's work. Finally, a total of 11 DNP MPs had no option but to leave Hungary. Their emigration took place in multiple waves, while a group of MPs who remained in Hungary were forced by the reigning communist government to declare the DNP's termination on behalf of the party's political committee.³⁷⁷ The resolution passed on 4 February 1949 was acknowledged by the parliament at the 10 March session.³⁷⁸

After the “turnaround year” of 1948, democracy ceased to exist in Hungary, even in a general sense: the termination of the country's multi-party system accelerated as the two workers' parties united under the name “Hungarian Workers' Party” [Magyar Dolgozók Pártja - MDP] in the summer of 1948. From the spring of 1949, the transformation of the “outdated” system of political institutions also seemed to take full effect: no role was left for the remainders of coalition parties that kept almost nothing of their former characters but their names. One by one, they got integrated into the Hungarian Independence People's Front [Magyar Függetlenségi Népfrent, MFNF], the sole participant at the 1949 elections, the only organization that people could vote for.³⁷⁹ Thus the parliamentary elections held in May 1949 resulted in the breakthrough success of the MDP: 71% of elected representatives were members of that party. “The elections in May were one of the key victories of Hungarian

³⁷⁶ István Barankovics: Sorsdöntő beszélgetés Rákosival. [A Crucial Discussion with Rákosi] In (Edit.) Ferenc Babóthy – Zoltán K. Kovács: Félbemaradt reformkor. Miért akadt el az ország keresztény-humanista megújulása? [Reform Era Unfinished. Why Hungary's Christian Humanist Renewal Came to a Halt?] Detti, Roma, 1990. pp. 242–250.

³⁷⁷ In this sense, the party's self-dissolution was contrary to the party's rules. Thus similarly to other parties of the coalition era, officially the Democratic People's Party did not cease to exist either.

³⁷⁸ Lajos Izsák: A Demokrata Néppárt „önfeloszlata”. [“Self-dissolution” of the Democratic People's Party.] In Id.: Polgári pártok és programjaik Magyarországon, 1944–1956. [Bourgeois Political Parties and Their Programmes in Hungary, 1944-1956.] Pannónia Books, Budapest, 1994. pp. 125–130.

³⁷⁹ György Gyarmati: Népfrent-tojásokból reakciós rántotta – à la ÁVH. Egy választás Magyarországon – kétféle eredménnyel – 1949-ben. [Reactionary Scrambled Eggs from a People's Front Hen Yard – State Security Style. One election, two different results in Hungary in 1949.] In Betekintő, Issue 2015/2. www.betekintő.hu (Downloaded 5 August 2015)

democracy and our party, something we have been waiting for since the liberation” – said the party’s general secretary, Mátyás Rákosi commenting on the results. After the elections, the people’s front (MFNF) stopped operations. Simultaneously to this, former coalition and opposition parties also stopped functioning, even though by that time their existence was only formal. This happened despite the fact that no law or decree ordered the termination or liquidation of these parties. Under communist dominance, the new parliament adopted Hungary’s new constitution without any real debate. The new constitution declared that Hungary is a “people’s republic” where “all power rests with the working people” and rejected the Montesquieu’s principle of dividing powers, on separating legislative, executive and judicial powers. Thus the Hungarian Workers’ Party *de facto* became the sole ruling party and the sovietisation of the Hungarian society and economy began.³⁸⁰

With the termination of the DNP and the formation of communist dictatorship, the history of Hungarian Christian democracy continued along two different lines: in Hungary and in abroad, in emigration. Amidst an atmosphere of fear, institutional party operations were impossible in Hungary: what awaited those who remained here was final exclusion from public life, various forms of retortion, show trials, imprisonment, internment, hard labour, police supervision, persecution by the authorities on an everyday basis and constant surveillance by state security.³⁸¹ As a result, the history of the party fell apart into individual fates for a long time. Vid Mihelics, a sociologist and one-time DNP MP, described the situation in 1950 as follows: “*The only option for Christian politics today is to de-politize its press and the movement. There is no point to do further attempts against this regime, because the imminent threat is not proportionate to the potentially attainable success. The events have grown over us by now, thus we must focus all our efforts at saving ourselves for a future opportunity.*”³⁸²

The regime may seem to have reached its objective in the case of Christian democracy as well: thanks to the employment of political and judicial means and the political police, Christian democracy was annihilated and its representatives were marginalized in social and political life. But it was actually far from the truth: an evidence of this is that at the time of the revolution of 1956, the party was revitalized in seconds.³⁸³ After the revolution was oppressed, persecution continued. At the same time, it founded the quiet but massive solidarity that served the greater cause of safeguarding Christian democratic values. It manifested in contact keeping with other Christian democrats: first only within Hungary, later with those who fled the country. This contact keeping was as intense as the circumstances allowed.

³⁸⁰ Lajos Izsák: Az ellenzéki pártok a fordulat évében. [Opposition Parties in the Turnaround Year.] In (Edit.) István Feitl–Lajos Izsák–Gábor Székely: Fordulat a világban és Magyarországon, 1947–1949. [A Turnaround in the World and in Hungary.] Napvilág Publishing House, Budapest, 2000. pp. 229–245.

³⁸¹ See more details in: Gábor Tabajdi: Kereszténydemokraták a politikai rendőrség célkeresztjében. [Christian Democrats in the Political Police’s Crosshair.] In (Edit.) Krisztián Ungváry: Bűvópatakok. A jobboldal és az állambiztonság 1945–1989. [Underground Currents. The Political Right-wing and State Security, 1945–1989.] 1956 Institute – Jaffa Publishing House, Budapest, 2013. pp. 183–220. and Id.: Egy tipikus jobboldali összeesküvő: Matheovits Ferenc és a pártállam. [A Typical Right-Wing Conspirator: Ferenc Matheovits and the Single-Party State.] In Ibid. pp. 221–256.

³⁸² Zoltán Frenyó: A magyar kereszténydemokrácia a kommunizmus árnyékában. ÁVH-jelentések a Demokrata Néppárttól. [Hungarian Christian Democracy in the Shadow of Communism. State Security Reports on the Democratic People’s Party.] In Magyar Szemle, new edition XXII, Issue 2000/1–2. pp. 68–88.

³⁸³ György Szakolczai – Szabó Róbert: Két kísérlet a proletárdiktatúra elhárítására. Barankovics és a DNP 1945–1949, Bibó és a DNP 1956. [Two Attempts to Prevent the Proletarian Dictatorship; Barankovics and the DNP 1945–1949; Bibó and the DNP 1956.] Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 2011. pp. 111–142. and Lajos Izsák: Keresztény pártok a forradalomban. [Christian Political Parties in the Revolution.] In (Edit. unknown): Az élő hagyomány. Barankovics István és a magyarországi kereszténydemokrácia öröksége. [Living Tradition – The Heritage of István Barankovics and Hungarian Christian Democracy.] István Barankovics Foundation – Gondolat Publishing House, Budapest, 2007. pp. 177–190.

“You do not *come* to emigrate, you are *forced* to emigrate” – wrote István Barankovics in his diary before leaving the country,³⁸⁴ and this statement was a true reflection of how he felt about emigration: he had to settle with being cut off from his roots and his natural intellectual and cultural environment, and with having very limited opportunity to work for Hungary just like other emigrant Christian democrats and many other members of democratic Hungarian opposition. However, it shows the greatness of Barankovics and his associates as humans and politicians that they constantly strove to expand this elbow room: once they got situated in their new countries, they immediately got involved in politics for the future of Hungary, Hungarian democracy and Christian democracy. They actively participated in the work of emigrant democratic Hungarian organizations (*Hungarian Christian People’s Movement [Magyar Keresztény Népmozgalom]*³⁸⁵, *Hungarian National Council [Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány]*) and they also established the organization of emigrant Christian democrats of oppressed East-Central European nations, the *Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe (CDUCE)*. Through these forums, they had an opportunity to present the developments in Hungary to the world’s leading politicians and to the public. Further, they could also keep contact with Christian democrats who remained in Hungary, even though this contact keeping was only indirect at the beginning.

One standout democratic Hungarian emigrant organization was the *Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány (Hungarian National Council)*. It was founded by politicians who left Hungary in the 1947 emigration wave with the purpose of continuing the anti-communist political struggle that they began home.³⁸⁶ In the cold war situation that evolved by then, they received semi-official support from the United States of America via the *Committee for a Free Europe*. The 13-member Executive Committee of the Hungarian National Council was regarded as a quasi shadow government.³⁸⁷ In addition to former speaker of the parliament Béla Varga, the Executive Committee also included former prime minister Ferenc Nagy and many of the leaders of democratic parties from the 1945–1948 period. One of them was István Barankovics, who chaired the “Religious Affairs and Public Education Committee” from 1951. A good indicator of the Hungarian National Council’s significance is the fact that it was under surveillance from Hungary’s communist state security right from the beginning. According to a membership registry, from the former politicians of the Democratic People’s Party and the professionals supporting it, Ferenc Babóthy, István Barankovics, Gyula Belső, György Eszterhás, Zoltán K. Kovács, Béla Kovrig, Miklós Mézes, Ferenc Pethe, Lajos Pócza, László

384 István Barankovics: Sorsdöntő beszélgetés Rákosival. [A Crucial Discussion with Rákosi] Op. cit. p. 250. About Barankovics’s years and activities in emigration cf.: Miklós Gyorgyevics: Barankovics István, a magyar kereszténydemokrácia apostola. Pályakép. [István Barankovics, Apostle of Hungarian Christian Democracy. A Career Overview.] In: (Edit.) Zoltán K. Kovács – Gyorgyevics Miklós: Híven önmagunkhoz. Barankovics István összegyűjtött írásai a kereszténydemokráciáról. [Being True to Ourselves. Collected Writings of István Barankovics on Christian Democracy.] Barankovics Academy Foundation, Budapest, 2001. pp. 474–508.

385 Formed on the initiative of József Közi-Horváth in May 1949 and became an effective community of movements that encompassed the entire Western world. About its history and key personalities see: Zoltán K. Kovács: Magyar kereszténydemokraták az emigrációban. [Hungarian Christian Democrats in Emigration.] In (Edit.) Ferenc Babóthy et al.: Félbemaradt reformkor. 1935–1949. Törekvések Magyarország keresztény humanista megújítására, a haza és a szegénység szolgálatában. [Reform Era Unfinished. 1935–1949. Endeavours for Hungary’s Christian Humanist Renewal, Serving the Homeland and the Poor.] Püski Publishing House, Budapest, 2005. pp. 263–274.

386 Magdolna Baráth: Támogatni vagy bomlasztani? Adalékok a magyar hivatalos szervek emigrációs politikájának változásához. [Support or Disorganize? Additions to the Changes in the Emigration Policy of Hungarian Authorities.] In Betekintő, Issue 2011/3. www.betekinto.hu (Downloaded 10 August 2015)

387 The United States government did not regard the Council as emigrant Parliament and did not consider the Executive Committee a refugee government. That would have required the breaking of diplomatic ties with Budapest. The role of Béla Varga and executive committee members was limited to coordinating the efforts of moderate emigrant political groups.

Varga and Miklós Villányi participated in the Council's work and thus got in the crosshair of state security.³⁸⁸

In addition to actively participating in the work of emigrant political organizations, Barankovics's attention increasingly turned towards political theory and church issues. He also influenced opposition minds in Hungary and in emigration through publishing his own writings and that of others on these topics.³⁸⁹ Beside Barankovics, one-time DNP MP and party lawyer dr. László Varga was by all means one of the most agile members of the emigrant Christian democratic community. Living in New York and working as an associate at the *Free Europe Council's* information department, he played a key role in coordinating the work of emigrant organizations. In the days of the revolution of 1956, he fought for getting Imre Nagy's government recognized by the UN. Later he tried to prevent the removal of the "Hungarian question" from the UN's agenda.³⁹⁰ Another standout emigrant Christian democratic politician was Zoltán K. Kovács who worked at the Hungarian editorial office of the *Free Europe Radio* from 1951. His work of decades in mediating values increasingly gained significance.

Right from the beginning, Christian democratic party leaders strove to promote closer cooperation between refugee parties from the region. After preliminary negotiations with the participation of Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian Christian democrats, the *Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe (CDUCE)* was established in New York on 26 July 1950. By creating these organizations, the founders were hoping that joint action would render more weight to their words and statements. The founders of the CDUCE were Adolf Prohazka (Czechoslovakia), Karol Popieł (Poland), Edward Stukel (Latvia), Kazys Pakstas (Lithuania), dr. László Varga (Hungary) and dr. Miha Krek (Yugoslavia). The chairman was József Közi-Horváth then István Barankovics from 1958 until his passing. The CDUCE's activity peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1950s, they established ties between West European and South American Christian democratic parties and CDUCE. The organization was also a full-right member of the Christian Democrat International. The repeatedly staged summits and congresses, they published and disseminated a great amount of information materials. Over time, the CDUCE ended up having its own representative office in Europe at EUCD's Brussels headquarters. The EUCD was the common organization of West European Christian Democratic parties, thus the relations between the latter and the CDUCE became closer as well.³⁹¹

CDUCE member organizations sustained contacts with their own countries and the Christian democratic forces there, thus they were aptly positioned to play a great role in reorganizing the Christian democratic parties in the region after the socialist regimes

³⁸⁸ ÁBTL [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security] 4.1. A-2127/17 pp. 77-80.

³⁸⁹ He was still in Austria when he edited his book titled *School of Christian Policy* but it was published in New York. The book is a collection of articles edited by Vid Mihelics and originally published in *Hazánk*. As chairman of the Hungarian National Council's Religious Affairs and Public Education Committee, he provided constructive criticism of Hungary's education policy in his work titled *The Cultural Programme of Hungarian Emigration [A magyar emigráció kultúrprogramja]*. With the Council's support, he launched the *Little Hungarian Library [Kis Magyar Könyvtár]* series. In the last phase of his work in emigration, his attention was focused on Christianity and the position of Christian churches: *Progression and Christian Politics [Haladás és keresztény politika]* was published in 1955, followed by *The Universal Synod and the Iron Curtain [Az egyetemes zsinat és a vasfüggöny]* in 1962. In Miklós Gyorgyevics: *Op. cit.* pp. 498–504.

³⁹⁰ His memoirs provide a thorough insight into his life: László Varga: *Kérem a vádlott felmentését! [Please Acquit the Defendant!]* Püski Publishing House, New York, 1981. and *Id.: Fények a ködben. Egy életút a nemzet szolgálatában. [Lights in the Fog. A Career in Service of the Nation.]* Médiamix, Salgótarján, 2002.

³⁹¹ Zoltán K. Kovács: *Op. cit.* p. 277.

collapsed.³⁹² Within former socialist countries, Hungary and Budapest were the first to host a CDUCE general meeting, in March 1990. At that meeting, the organization elected its new executive board with dr. Sándor Karcsay as chairman and Jan Čarnogurský as general secretary. After that, the CDUCE secretariat was relocated to Bratislava. In 1992, after the re-founded Christian democratic parties became legitimate in their respective countries, the EUCD admitted them one by one as regular members. With that, the CDUCE fulfilled its role and terminated operations.³⁹³ Effective 30 September 1989, the Christian Democratic People's Party was officially launched in Hungary, too. Following extensive preparations, the party elected its first executive board as per the statutes and with that a new era began in the history of Hungarian Christian democracy.

In summary, the emigrant Hungarian Christian democratic movement played a bridging role between 1949 and 1989 that successfully connected the historic tradition of Hungary's former Democratic People's Party and the European Christian Democratic tradition with Hungarian initiatives. Upon the change of the political system in Hungary, these established ties between Hungary and the international Christian democratic community helped integrate into the identity of the Christian Democratic People's the heritage of the Democratic People's Party as a historic legitimating base and the connections to West European Christian democratic parties as the European example.³⁹⁴

II. The promise of a European Christian democratic party, 1989–1990

In 1989, 24 of the one-time MPs of the Democratic People's Party were still alive, ten of them in emigration and fourteen in Hungary. All of them supported the re-foundation of the Christian Democratic People's Party, but only Sándor Keresztes, József Kovács, Zoltán K. Kovács, Ferenc Matheovits, Szabó Ferenc, József Ugrin and László Varga of the 24 assumed office in the party.³⁹⁵

Ties to West European Christian democratic parties and organizations played an important role in organizing the KDNP right from the beginning. Walking in the footsteps of the Democratic People's Party, the KDNP could rightfully count on the relations established by the activities of DNP MPs in emigration: both emigrant Christian democrats and those who remained in Hungary were anticipating the termination of the Soviet system. As the change of the political system was becoming reality, the connections they established and cherished were vitalized as well.³⁹⁶ One admitted objective of creating the new party was to ensure that the Hungarian member party can take its rightful place in the large family of European Christian democratic parties.

³⁹² Niels Arbøl: *A kereszténydemokrácia Európában. [Christian Democracy in Europe.]* István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 1995. pp. 113–114.

³⁹³ Zoltán K. Kovács: *Op. cit.* p. 277.

³⁹⁴ Regarding party identity strategies see the study by Rita Mária Kiss herein.

³⁹⁵ Róbert Szabó: *Egy keresztény párt (KDNP) a rendszerváltás évében (1989–1990). [A Christian Party (KDNP) in the Years of the Political System Change.]* In (Edit.) Attila Réfi–István Sziklai: *Pártok, pártrendszerek, parlamentarizmus kutatócsoport évkönyve. [Yearbook of the Parties, Party Systems, Parliamentarism Research Group]* HAS–ELTE Parties, Party Systems, Parliamentarism Research Group–HAS Institute for Political Science, Budapest, 2009. p. 57.

³⁹⁶ Interview with László Surján by Éva Petrás on 12 June 2015.

One of the first accomplishments in establishing an international network of connections was participation at the EUCD conference held in Vienna on 24-27 May 1989 for the Christian democratic representatives of Eastern bloc countries. Only the Polish and Hungarian regime allowed invitees from the respective countries to attend. The Czech, Croatian, Slovak, Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Christian democratic movements were represented by emigrants.³⁹⁷ From Hungary, Sándor Karcsay, Sándor Keresztes, Pál Marik and György Szakolczai attended the conference. Hungarian participants from West Europe included Mária András, Dzsingisz Gábor, Zoltán K. Kovács and József Varga. Also in attendance was Árpád Fasang in representation of the MDF.³⁹⁸ Later Zoltán K. Kovács gave a positive assessment of the Hungarian delegation's participation also in respect of the KDNP's re-foundation process.³⁹⁹

The party also received a part of the supportive attention that came towards new East Central European democracies irrespective of political party families, attempting to help democratic processes. László Surján, chairman of the KDNP between 1990 and 1995 recalled the event as follows: “...the party that was the closest to us, the Austrian People's Party and the foundations behind it [...] invited the new parties from the region, without any political commitment in the first time, e.g. to the legendary Mozart ship; they held conferences there. And representatives of the Hungarian opposition, who still more or less belonged to a single camp back then, gained common knowledge and relationships there which they either used later or not...”⁴⁰⁰

Later, in particular after the formal re-foundation of the KDNP in September 1989, bilateral relations between the parties were also established. A study by Sándor Karcsay published in the 1989/1 issue of *Hazánkért* under the title *International Relations of our Party (Pártunk nemzetközi kapcsolatai)* reviews the KDNP's potential foreign partner parties.⁴⁰¹ Beside the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Germany's CDU and CSU, the Dutch Christian democratic party, the CDA (Christen Democratisch Appèl) deserves attention.

Close ties with the CDA were established via two channels already at the time of the KDNP's re-foundation. Seated in Budapest, the Christian Democratic Academy of East Central Europe could come to existence in 1991 thanks to the friendship of László Surján and CDA chairman Wim van Velzen. The purpose of the academy was to provide training to young politicians in the region.⁴⁰² However, Dutch-Hungarian Christian democratic relations and the promotion of KDNP's European integration mostly related to Dzsingisz Gábor, a

³⁹⁷ Katalin Lukácsi: Negyedszázados évfordulóját ünnepli a KDNP. II. rész. [The KDNP celebrates 25th Anniversary, Part II.] In www.barankovics.hu (Downloaded on 11 August 2015)

³⁹⁸ Zoltán K. Kovács: Op. cit. p. 287.

³⁹⁹ MNL OL P 2264 Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) held a conference from 13 to 15 April 1992 on the Mozart ship sailing between Vienna and Bratislava. Titled “European roundtable”, the conference was organized for representatives of former socialist countries and the Baltic states. For more information on the event, see: Hungarian State Television report dated 14.04.1992. In National Audio-Visual Archives (Downloaded on 13 August 2015).

⁴⁰¹ Sándor Karcsay: Pártunk nemzetközi kapcsolatai. [International Relations of our Party.] In *Hazánkért*, Issue 1989/1, pp. 18–21. For a more detailed analysis see: Sándor Karcsay: A kereszténydemokrata külpolitika koncepciója. [The Foreign Policy Concept of Christian Democracy.] In *Külpolitika, the Theory and Policy Periodical of the Hungarian Institute for Foreign Affairs*, Issue 1989/1. pp. 18–27.

⁴⁰² Zoltán K. Kovács: Magyar kereszténydemokraták az emigrációban. [Hungarian Christian Democrats in Emigration] Op. cit. p. 277. The academy's successor is the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI) that has been operating in Budapest since 1995, www.schuman-institute.eu. Specializing in training future EPP politicians from East Central and Eastern Europe, the institute has a success record in organizing courses and conferences themed around EU integration and European values. The role of the Robert Schuman Institute was underscored by György Hölvényi, a KDNP member of the European Parliament. In Interview with György Hölvényi. 27 March 2015.

representative of the CDA. In terms of passing on the tradition and networking, he worked relentlessly for the KDNP right from the beginning.⁴⁰³ It was Dzsingisz Gábor who enabled personal support at EUCD sessions for the cause of Hungarian Christian democracy. This Hungarian Christian democratic politician living in the Netherlands did a lot for getting the newly refounded KDNP's work known in Brussels. E.g. in a letter to Zoltán K. Kovács, Gábor reported in detail on the EUCD faction's session held on 5 September 1989, providing him with a detailed view of what anticipations evolved within the EUCD regarding the KDNP's launch. At the faction meeting, Gábor presented to EUCD representatives the KDNP's programme and situation. Thanks to this presentation, those in Brussels accepted it as a clear value that in Hungary the KDNP is *"the only party that is spotless and has a completely straight backbone."*⁴⁰⁴

Thus relations with the EUCD blossomed and enjoyed support from various sources.⁴⁰⁵ The connection with the EUCD general secretary, Thomas Jansen was especially close. He promised and delivered significant financial support which the party could spend on procuring communication equipment, something they were badly lacking in the beginning. Thomas Jansen visited Hungary from 12 to 14 July 1989. At the EUCD faction's meeting referenced above, he reported in detail on his findings during the trip. Zoltán K. Kovács wrote about Jansen's trip in a letter dated September 1989 as follows: *"Since this party, as the successor of the Democratic People's Party, has been cooperating with the European People's Party via the Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe for long, Jansen wanted to express European solidarity with his visit. He used his meetings with our friends to clarify the opportunities for cooperation. KDNP leaders helped prepare meetings for Jansen with leaders of the democratic opposition. Before he left the country, Jansen also met state minister Imre Pozsgay."*⁴⁰⁶ With that background, it was no surprise that at the EUCD faction meeting Thomas Jansen was of the opinion that for the EUCD, the KDNP was the party to keep contact with in Hungary, since *"[...] Mária András and Zoltán K. Kovács who are living in the West have been representing the cause of Hungarian Christian democracy at international forums for years via the Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe."*⁴⁰⁷ As a fortunate coincidence, the KDNP submitted their application for admittance to the EUCD on 4 September 1989, right before the faction meeting referenced above. Thus the application could be evaluated in conjunction with Thomas Jansen's report.

The KDNP's inaugural meeting took place on 30 September 1989. In addition to the 154 elected delegates, 300 guests were in attendance, many of them from abroad. Western organizations were represented by the following attendees: Hanja May-Weggen, Dutch vice president of the European Parliament's Christian Democratic faction; Ingo Friedrich, member of the faction's executive board; Wim van Velzen, chairman of the Dutch Christian Democratic Party; Robert H. van de Beeten, vice chairman of the same party and Dzsingisz

⁴⁰³ Interview with György Hölvényi. 27 March 2015.

⁴⁰⁴ MNL OL P 2264. Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41.

⁴⁰⁵ Summarized by Katalin Lukácsi after processing the heritage Zoltán K. Kovács in Lukácsi Katalin: A Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt története. (Kéziratban) [The History of the Christian Democratic People's Party. (Manuscript)], pp. 34–37. and Katalin Lukácsi: Negyedszázados évfordulóját ünnepli... [The KDNP celebrates 25th Anniversary] Ibid. Hereinafter we will refer to her research results regarding Zoltán K. Kovács's activities.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

Gábor, chairman of the CDA's "Central European" Committee; Jacques Lefevre, secretary general of Belgium's Christian Social Party; Rudolf Rezsóházy, the party's theoretical advisor; Pierre Scharff, spokesperson of the same party; Klaus Franke, a CDU representative in the Bonn parliament; György von O'sváth, member of the CDU's action community in Brussels; Otto Wiesheu, member of the Bavarian parliament and managing director of the Hanns Seidel Foundation, and Michael Ikrath, a People's Party member of the Austrian parliament. Poland was represented by Jakob Moskwa from the Solidarity movement and Marek Holubicki, a delegate of the Catholic Workers' Party. Emigrant former DNP MPs in attendance included Zoltán K. Kovács from Munich, Miklós Mézes from Canada and László Varga from New York.⁴⁰⁸

Several of the representatives of foreign organizations contributed to the meeting. Later their speeches were summarized by Zoltán K. Kovács as follows: *"Representatives of foreign sister parties passed on the greetings of their organizations. Many of them cited their historical ties to Hungarians. All of them stressed the basically Christian, European and democratic values that their parties represent in the integrating public life of their home countries and West Europe. They praised the importance of adapting democracy, social justice and freedoms into Hungary's evolving democratic political life in the process of social and economic development. They offered moral and practical support in that process."*⁴⁰⁹

The next grade was the adoption of a resolution at the EUCD's congress held in Malta on 5–7 November 1989. The resolution regulated in detail the EUCD's relations to emerging parties in East Central Europe. It greeted the democratic processes in those countries and assured the re-founded Christian democratic parties, among them the KDNP, of their support; further, the EUCD resolved to cooperate with those parties and create the necessary legal and political conditions for establishing long-term, multilateral relations between the Christian democratic parties of East Central Europe and Western Europe. Further, the congress declared the EUCD's readiness to cooperate with any democratic movement that represents Christian democratic ideas in the countries of the region.⁴¹⁰ This way, all barriers were removed from the KDNP's integration into the EUCD and thus the party was admitted to the international organization in June 1990.

After the KDNP was re-founded, the EUCD was not the only international organization to support it. They were also approached by the European Democrat Union (EDU), home of liberal conservatives and other conservative parties to establish ties. In EDU chairman Alois Mock, former vice chancellor of Austria, the KDNP found a supporter who had first hand insight into Hungarian domestic politics since the beginning of the change of the political system and assisted the party's international integration on that basis. Therefore, the KDNP decided to participate in the work of both EUCD and EDU. As Surján observed, *"... there was some rivalry between the two organizations and I thought KDNP was of the opinion that we did not need to take a stance in this debate. We need to take every opportunity to build*

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ MNL OL P 2264 Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. Item 41.

⁴¹⁰ Niels Arbøll: Op. cit. pp. 155–157.

*connections because those ties serve the good of Hungary in the background.*⁴¹¹ Thus the KDNP was also admitted to the EDU in August 1990. László Surján was elected as both EUCD and EDU vice chairman in 1992 and 1993, respectively.

Since the very beginning, Zoltán K. Kovács played a decisive role in shaping the KDNP's international relations. Also in his capacity as an associate of *Radio Free Europe*, Kovács took every opportunity to interview KDNP politicians and thus promote them to listeners.⁴¹² Further, he regularly sent "Situationsberichts", i.e. status reports to the CDU, the CSU, to the Hanns-Seidel and Konrad-Adenauer foundations and to Otto von Habsburg.⁴¹³ Thus in combination with the party's membership in international organizations, the KDNP's bilateral international relations also developed easily. Being on terms with Otto von Habsburg meant strong support towards the Bavarian Christian social party, the CSU. As one of the most successful political parties in Europe after World War II, the CSU embodied a key European example for the KDNP. Thanks to Bavaria's position within Germany, it was mentioned as an example of subsidiarity and sub-regional cooperation in a publication released with the Hanns Seidel Foundation's support.⁴¹⁴

III. European example – European standards

Reference to the European Christian democratic heritage and the presentation of contemporary examples came to the fore under the leadership of László Surján when the party strove to further develop its image as a modern, future oriented, European organization. While the awareness of responsibility as a historical party has always been present in the KDNP's policies, meeting the challenges of contemporary politics and developing an effective programme accordingly became increasingly urgent a task over time. In this respect, the party's congress held in Gödöllő between 24 and 26 April 1992 produced serious remarkable results. The promotional and programme materials prepared for the congress relied on serious background work in many areas. Among others, the party's Foreign Affairs Committee also prepared a study, titled "*KDNP – Hungary's Foreign Policy*", the findings of which were then incorporated into the party's so-called "Gödöllő programme theses". The analysis underscores that "*Christian democracy is an alternative that does not require abandoning our freshly regained national identity. At the same time, community-oriented (common) thinking and responsibility are inherent in it; it is credibly democratic and expresses social solidarity. As it reflects Christian values, its deep roots are strong and it is capable of giving an ideologically clear response to the social, economic and moral challenges of our era. As it respects justice and man, it is equally suitable a political toolset for managing internal conflicts and mitigating foreign disagreements.*"⁴¹⁵ In the subsequent sections, the study outlined programme proposals for Hungary's future accession into the European Union and

⁴¹¹ Interview with László Surján. Op. cit.

⁴¹² Katalin Lukácsi: Op. cit.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ CSU: The Christian Social Union in Bavaria, Germany, Europe. Budapest, 1994.

⁴¹⁵ Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (KDNP) – Magyarország külpolitikája. [Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) – Hungary's Foreign Policy.] In Party documents. Materials of the Gödöllő congress.

the NATO based on Christian democratic values. The proposals paid special attention to defending the interests of Hungarians living outside Hungary.⁴¹⁶

The programme theses of the Gödöllő congress discussed Hungary's foreign policy principles and opportunities in a dedicated chapter, along with the related tasks of the KDNP. The KDNP's programme was derived from the national thought and highlighted the security policy aspects of the matter. One particular value of the programme was that it outlined the problem solving opportunities in regionalism.⁴¹⁷ The chapter titled "*Towards European integration*" names the two pillars of Christian democratic foreign policy: First, "solidarity based on Christian ethics and charity" and, second, "international justice". Then it sums up the KDNP's foreign policy objective: "*Integration into the European political, cultural, social, economic and security system while preserving our national identity and historic culture.*"⁴¹⁸ Further, in elaborating on programme theses in detail, the section titled "*Policy regarding minorities and ethnic groups*" underscores the top priority of protecting minorities while agreeing with the Helsinki Final Act and other relevant international treaties. Therefore, the KDNP considers it a foreign policy best practice that the ratification of bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries should be subject to the presence of minority protection guarantees in those agreements. Finally, the chapter titled "*Core principles and tasks of our security policy*" declares that "*we wish to live in peace and security with all states and nations, thus we do not have any pre-fabricated enemies.*"⁴¹⁹ The protection of ethnic minorities was so current a topic that even a conference was organized around it by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, titled "*Rights of minorities from the Hungarian and the European view*". Otto von Habsburg was one of the presenters at that event.⁴²⁰ The issue was current owing to the political debates around the would-be basic treaties between Slovakia and Hungary and Romania and Hungary.⁴²¹

Although the worldview party component in the identity of the Christian Democratic People's Party originated in the unique historical development of Christian democracy in Hungary, the party strove to get rid of the "Catholic" party stigma. Instead, similarly to Western European sister parties and as a political organization functioning in a multi-confessional and secular country, its endeavour was to admit protestant or even non-faithful members while being committed to universal Christian values. Dzsingisz Gábor pointed out the importance of this in April 1990 already in a letter to the KDNP's National Executive Board. As he put it, the Christian Democratic People's Party would only become "the party of the future" if consistent steps are taken to establish "Catholic and Protestant" cooperation

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Róbert Győri Szabó: A parlamenti pártok és az alapszerződések, 1994–1997. [Parliamentary Parties and Basic Treaties] In Magyar kisebbség. Nemzetpolitikai Szemle [Hungarian Minority. National Policy Review] Issue 2000/4. www.hhrf.org/magyarkisebbsseg/0004 (Downloaded on 18 August 2015)

⁴¹⁸ A kongresszus üzenete. A gödöllői kongresszus programtézisei. [Message of the Congress. Programme Theses of the Gödöllő Congress] Christian Democratic People's Party, Budapest, 1992. p. 35.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. p. 37.

⁴²⁰ MNL OL KDNP Invitations. Box 51, item 55.

⁴²¹ The day after the basic treaty between Slovakia and Hungary was concluded on 19 March 1995, a quasi early ratification debate evolved in the parliament. In the debate, KDNP MPs outlined that they do support the fact that the treaty has been signed but they can only support a good treaty. However, the treaty was signed in an atmosphere of mutual distrust and only the future would tell which elements of it can be implemented. KDNP was lacking effective guarantees otherwise the treaty would be "even less effective than holy water". See: Róbert Győri Szabó: Op. cit. The minutes of the joint KDNP executive board and parliamentary faction session held on 17 May 1995 provide a detailed insight into the process that finally led to a "no" vote to the Slovak-Hungarian basic treaty at the final ratification vote (13 June 1995). In Party documents. Executive board documents.

among others.⁴²² The KDNP's Protestant Workshop was an important forum for this initiative. It was established on the request of Christian democrat Protestant pastors and presbyters in 1992 with the purpose of representing the Protestant heritage within the party. As the Managing Committee wrote: "*We are inclined to do this by the Lutheran life principle of responsible freedom and Calvin's life practice that serves God's glory in politics, too.*"⁴²³ The Protestant Workshop actively maintained ties to West European protestant Christian democratic platforms, creating unique connections with the related parties, in particular the Dutch CDA and Germany's CDU. E.g. in the framework of this cooperation, a Dutch-Hungarian conference was held about public life, titled "*Christians working together for tomorrow's Hungary*". The event was organized by the Dutch Calvinist Political Alliance (GPV), the Hungarian Calvinist Presbyterian Alliance and the KDNP's Protestant Workshop.⁴²⁴

The Protestant Workshop fulfilled an especially important mission in respect of Germany, since owing to its size the CDU was the most important benchmark for the KDNP among Western Europe's Christian Democratic parties. In October 1993, Gottfried Mehnert's book titled *Protestants in Christian Democracy – or What We Can Learn from the German Way*⁴²⁵ was translated and published on the initiative of the KDNP's Protestant Workshop. On the occasion of the book release, Angela Merkel, who was the federal president of the CDU/CSU's Lutheran/Protestant Working Group and federal minister for women's and youth issues, greeted the KDNP's Protestant Workshop in a written message.⁴²⁶ At the book launch event, the author held a lecture titled "*Protestant contribution to Christian democratic policies*". The Protestant Workshop actively cherished German connections, e.g. the sent delegations to the CDU/CSU Protestant Working Group's annual meetings.⁴²⁷ Creating the image of a European-class Christian democratic party was a priority in the 1994 campaign strategy and was closely related to endeavours of creating a genuine people's party. The most important example for this may have been provided by the CDU.⁴²⁸

However, the 1994 elections brought disappointing results compared to anticipations and the KDNP had to renew its image. The new executive board led by György Giczy was thought to be capable of delivering that. Here we only discuss the international aspects of the KDNP's internal crisis. These aspects became important because in this context the connections to European Christian democratic parties did not primarily serve as examples anymore, but as standard.⁴²⁹

The EUCD's "East and Central Europe" working group discussed the situation around the KDNP on two occasions in Brussels in 1997: On 9-10 and 19 January. In addition, the EUCD also delegated a fact finding committee to Hungary between 6 and 8 March. After that

⁴²² 13 April 1990. In Party documents. Executive board documents.

⁴²³ Information on the KDNP's Protestant Workshop. In Party documents. Executive Board documents, 14 October 1993.

⁴²⁴ The conference was held at the Gáspár Károli Calvinist University in Budapest on 27 August 1994. See: MNL OL KDNP documents. Box 33, Item 41.

⁴²⁵ Gottfried Mehnert: *Protestánsok a kereszténydemokráciában*. [Protestants in Christian Democracy.] István Barankovics Foundation, Budapest, 1993.

⁴²⁶ Grußwort der Bundesvorsitzenden des Evangelischen Arbeitskreises der CDU/CSU, Bundesministerin Dr. Angela Merkel, an den Protestantischen Arbeitskreis der Christlich-Demokratischen Volkspartei Ungarns, Bonn, 14. October 1993. In Party documents. Executive board documents. 14 October 1993.

⁴²⁷ E.g. in Lübeck between 22 and 29 October 1993. Acting KDNP Protestant Workshop chairman Miklós Lukács and Lajos Békefy were invited to this convention by Angela Merkel. In Party documents. Executive board documents. 5 November 1993.

⁴²⁸ About this topic see the study by Rita Mária Kiss herein.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

the KDNP's opponent factions met in Bratislava on 18 April. The meeting was brokered by the EUCD and was closed with a declaration on reconciliation. However, once he returned to Hungary, chairman György Giczy said to the press that he did not regard the declaration binding. As evidenced by a letter from EUCD chairman Wim van Velzen to György Giczy, that was the moment when Giczy's side lost credibility before the EUCD. Velzen even questioned the honesty of Giczy's intent to negotiate and called the Bratislava meeting a campaign trick before the upcoming KDNP congress.⁴³⁰ Then the EUCD Council excluded the KDNP from the international organization in 11 July 1997, citing the KDNP's potential cooperation with the MIÉP as the immediate reason, and the fact that the party did not distance itself from the possibility of such cooperation. As Velzen wrote, "*the KDNP, a party that declares itself as Christian democrat and that is a member of the European organization of Christian democratic parties, assumed a moral commitment with its EUCD membership. If a party violates this moral commitment, it displaces itself from the group that accepts and observes these commitments. A party like this does not belong to the family of European Christian democrats anymore.*"⁴³¹ The exclusion from the EUCD was huge reputation damage for the KDNP, not to mention the domestic policy impact that ultimately ended with the dissolution of the party's parliamentary faction after a series of exclusions from the party. The European family of Christian democratic parties took back the KDNP only in 2007, long after Hungary's accession to the European Union and years after the party's situation got settled.

IV. European integration

Like other Hungarian parties after the change of the political system in the country, the KDNP was also seeking opportunities to join West European party alliances. While links to Western parties proved immeasurably valuable in terms of setting an example and standards, European institutions alone did not guarantee a successful performance in domestic policy: in this sense, international relations do not have a direct impact. As shown by the KDNP's history after the political system change, close connections based on shared European values may only inspire and support internal development but cannot substitute for it. However, Hungary's accession to the European Union brought a significant change in international relations, opening up the underlying opportunities to the KDNP as well.

The general anticipation regarding East Central European parties was that the European integration of the respective countries would weaken those parties that stood out from the ideological landscape of European party families and that parties organized at European level, i.e. the "Euro-parties" would assist "standard" parties. Even though opposite examples may exist, this impact was indeed detectable. According to analyses prepared after EU accession, more and more parties strove to align themselves to a European party group.

⁴³⁰ "The ambivalence of your commitment expressed in the Hungarian press created serious doubts about the true reason why you wanted to reconcile with the EUCD before your party Congress." Letter from Wim van Velzen to György Giczy, 4 September 1997. In Bequest of Zoltán K. Kovács. MNL OL P 2264 Item 41.

⁴³¹ "The KDNP, a party which declares itself Christian Democratic and which is a member of a European organisation of Christian Democratic parties, accepted a moral obligation with the EUCD membership. If a party breaks that moral obligation, it places itself outside the group of parties who do accept this commitment. Such a party does not belong anymore to the Christian Democratic European family." Ibid.

Albeit gradually, these parties began to fit in European ideological patterns and integrated into European party alliances. Membership in the European People's Party is an immense opportunity that impacts the KDNP's international presence and domestic policy alike. The winners of the coming decades are likely to be member state parties that are able to align their operations to the dynamics of the new environment.⁴³²

⁴³² Zsolt Enyedi: Az európai integráció hatása a kelet-európai és magyar pártstratégiákra. [The Impact of European Integration on Party Strategies in Central Europe and Hungary.] In: (Edit.) István Hegedűs: A magyarok bemenetele. Tagállamként a bővülő Európai Unióban. [Accession of the Hungarians. A Member State in the Expanding European Union.] Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Alapítvány [Hungarian Centre of Democracy Research], Budapest, 2006. pp. 155–180.

RÓBERT SZABÓ

BACKGROUND AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S PARTY, 1988–2010

1988

3 December

Áron Márton Society established. Chairman: Sándor Keresztes.

1989

30 January

The Association of Christian Intellectuals was established at the Adalbertinum Evangelization Centre in Esztergom, with objective of taking care of Christian social and cultural tasks.

11 March

In the assembly hall of ELTE University, the Áron Márton Society held a memorial event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Áron Márton's ordination as bishop. Speeches were delivered by Sándor Keresztes and Imre Pozsgay.

15 March

Former Democratic People's Party representatives (Sándor Keresztes, Ferenc Matheovits and József Ugrin) announced the foundation of the Christian Democratic People's Party.

14 April

In the presence of former Democratic People's Party representatives (Sándor Keresztes, József Kovács and József Ugrin), a meeting was held about organizational matters of the Christian Democratic People's Party. A decision was made on elaborating the party's programme and constitution, and on the publication of the approved sections. An agreement was made to set up a Temporary Managing Committee (led by Sándor Keresztes), comprising former DNP members. The body also made a resolution on involving additional external members.

Organized by the Ferenc Rákóczi II, Catholic Adult College Association, an exhibition showcasing the intellectual heritage of the former KALOT adult colleges was opened in Szeged.

June

The KDNP's programme was published. This was only a draft collection of core principles covering eight topics.

7 June

The Opposition Roundtable session admitted the Christian Democratic People's Party, political successor of the István Barankovics's DNP, as a new member. At the accession talks, the KDNP was represented by György Szokolczai and it was him who signed the agreement.

13 June

At the first political meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt - MSZMP), various political organizations and the Opposition Roundtable, the Christian Democratic People's Party was represented by Tibor Füzessy and György Szokolczai, then Sándor Keresztes.

19 June

At Szekszárd, KDNP made its first meeting outside Budapest. The local organizing committee of the party held their first introduction and recruitment convention at the House of Arts.

23 June.

At a convention held at Budapest's Attila József Grammar School, KDNP leaders announced the party's national launch.

4 August

The KDNP's National Organizing Committee was established.

31 August

At the National Organizing Committee's session, the members of the National Managing Committee were elected (Sándor Keresztes chairman, Tibor Füzessy vice chairman, István Szabó vice chairman, Miklós Hasznos, László Lántzky, Miklós Lukáts, Pál Marik, György Szokolczai and László Szakonyi), with mandates ending on the statutory meeting of delegates convened for 30 September. On the same day, the party's Youth Section was established. One of its objectives was to "launch activities in public life that shape democracy and thinking".

September

First issue of the KDNP's informative periodical, *Hazánkért* [For our Homeland] was published. Editor-in-chief: György Giczy.

5 September

An "October 23 Committee" was formed in Hungary to make preparations in order to declare the anniversary of the revolution and freedom fight of 23 October 1956 a national holiday and to organize celebrations. KDNP was represented by Gábor Balogh in the organization.

11 September

First statutes of KDNP were drafted.

16 September

KDNP received from the government a 199 square metre office space located in a District 5 building (Arany János u. 10.) rented out by the Ministry of Industry.

18 September

Five parties of the Opposition Roundtable (MDF, KDNP, FKgP, Hungarian People's Party, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Association) signed the agreement that closed three months of political harmonization talks. Fidesz and the SZDSZ abstained.

30 September

At a meeting in the Attila József Grammar School in Budapest, the party's statutes were approved and its programme was announced. The KDNP's objective was the establishment of a democratic multi-party system and integration into the community of European nations. At the 1st National Board Session, the KDNP's national officials were elected. Sándor Keresztes was elected as party chairman, Emese Ugrin as general secretary. The members of the executive board were as follows: Tibor Füzessy, Hasznos Miklós (chief prosecutor), László Seszták, Miklós Lukáts (national organizing secretary), Miklós Gáspár (national organizing secretary). Until the elections, the party remained in a constructive opposition role.

19 November

The first Mindszenty memorial statue was unveiled in Nemesgulács. At the ceremony, the party was represented by József Kovács and Ferenc Matheovits.

4 December

In order to promote operations that comply with Christian and democratic principles and practice, a Unity Platform was established within the KDNP. The agenda item of their first session held in the Jurta Színház (Yurt Theatre) on 9 December was the assessment of the KDNP's policy and to identify action items.

27 December

Sándor Keresztes requested the party's members, future voters and its West European sister parties to donate to Transylvania via church and aid organizations and the Red Cross. Donations were meant to be deducted from contributions to the party's election campaign.

1990

1 January

The party's national executive board published the party's 100-point election programme titled the "Christian Way".

27 March

At the first round of the parliamentary elections held on 25 March, the KDNP received a total of 6.46 % of votes and became the sixth largest Hungarian political party.

30 March

The MDF, the KDNP and the FKgP entered into an election alliance for the second round of the elections. The three parties called on their voters to support the candidate in the best position in each constituency.

8 April

In the two-round parliamentary elections, the party obtained 21 mandates. Three candidates were elected directly: Sándor Tóth, Péter Juhász and Gábor Kovács, all three of them from Nógrád county. The other members of the faction were Gábor Balogh, Gyula Cséfalvay, Béla Csépe, Tibor Füzessy, Miklós Gáspár, György Giczy, Miklós Hasznos, János Herczeg, Ferenc Inotay, Tamás Isépy, Sándor Karcsay, Sándor Keresztes, Tamás Lukács, Miklós Lukács, Miklós Pálos, Nándor Rott, László Seszták and Emese Ugrin.

15 April

On the second day of the two-day meeting of the KDNP's parliamentary faction and the Managing Committee, officials were elected for the parliamentary faction. Tibor Füzessy was elected as faction leader and Miklós Gáspár as faction secretary. The delegation charged with coalition negotiations (comprising Ferenc Balogh, Tibor Füzessy, Keresztes Sándor, Miklós Pálos and Emese Ugrin) was assigned to enter into bilateral talks about the coalition government's programme not only with the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) but with the Smallholders' Party (FKgP) as well.

23 April

Second national convention of the party held. Sándor Keresztes and Emese Ugrin were left out from the executive board and the general secretary position was terminated. The new party chairman was László Surján. The associate chairmen were János Birkás, Tamás Lukács, Miklós Pálos and László Varga. Executive board members: Zsuzsa Dobrányi, Péter Farkas, István Fazekas, Tibor Füzessy, Péter Harrach, Pál Marik, Zsolt Semjén, Terézia Szilágyiné Császár, Sándor Tóth and Miklós Hasznos.

3 May

From the KDNP faction, Sándor Tóth and Gábor Balogh were elected as parliamentary notaries.

16 May

József Antall's coalition government entered office (MDF, KDNP, FKgP). KDNP chairman László Surján was assigned to lead the Ministry of Welfare.

24 May

Two MPs of the party, Miklós Pálos and Tamás Isépy were appointed as state secretaries for political affairs at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice, respectively.

26–27 May

The party's statutes were amended at an extended session of the national board. Former decisions on personnel were made final (vice chairmen and associate chairmen), with their work assisted by a 10-member managing body. Sándor Keresztes was elected as the party's honorary chairman. The recent period, the party's election results and the new political direction were assessed. According to the KDNP's Executive Committee, a trilateral partite agreement must be signed by the coalition partners, regulating cooperation among them along with the responsibilities associated with governmental and legislative work.

1 June

Christian democrat MP Miklós Lukáts was appointed as state secretary for political affairs at the Ministry of Culture and Public Education. After he was dismissed from the position on 14 September, he worked as state secretary for political affairs at the Prime Minister's Office.

June

The KDNP was admitted to the European Christian Democratic Union (EUCD).

7 July

First issue of Kereszténydemokrata Hírlevél [Christian Democratic Newsletter] published. This periodical served as an internal information bulleting of the KDNP. It was edited by Róbert Soboltynski and later Ildikó László.

12 August

At the political rally held at the KDNP's 1st National Convention, chairman László Surján announced that the party's membership is growing on an ongoing basis. He pointed out that the party supports optional religious studies at school but considers it an indispensable part of education at schools.

30 August

In Helsinki, the KDNP joined the European Democratic Union (EDU).

31 August

Sándor Keresztes resigned from his parliamentary mandate owing to his appointment as the ambassador of the Republic of Hungary accredited to the Holy See and (later) to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. On 11 September, the KDNP faction elected chairman László Surján to fill the vacancy.

6 September

According to the statements made at a KDNP press conference, the party urged the establishment of a market oriented agricultural economy resting in mixed ownership, where various forms of private ownership, along with local government and foundation ownership are decisive. Prerequisites of this include legislation on compensation, privatization, renting, land protection and land utilization laws plus the settlement of land ownership matters.

15 September

After local government elections, 5.71% of the 2,165 representatives elected in individual constituencies were Christian democrats. In the votes for lists, the KDNP received 7.8% of the 1,954 mandates at 162 settlements. In Budapest, 5% of votes for the General Assembly of the Capital went to the KDNP.

November

The KDNP established the István Barankovics Foundation.

6 November

Hungary became a member of the Council of Europe, thereby adopting the institution of the rule of law and guaranteeing for its citizens the basic freedoms and human rights.

16 December

In Budapest, a national organization of Christian democratic youth was established under the name Union of Young Christian Democrats. At the inaugural session, an executive board was elected (comprising founder-chairman György Hölvényi, vice chairmen Péter Balázs and Marcell Szabó, national organizing secretary Szabolcs Szilágyi and Gábor Pósfai) and the statutes were approved.

18 December

With the participation of approximately 50 mayors and vice-mayors, the Club of Christian Democratic Mayors was set up. Members were working in sections and discussed all local government related matters without observing party policy considerations. The forum is open to those who feel close to Christian ideas and morals.

1991

19 January

At the first Managing Committee session of the year, László Surján and Tibor Füzessy reported on the status of the party and the parliamentary faction. They pointed out that the party's image had changed. The public viewed the KDNP as a peaceful party that is ready to negotiate and make compromises. They emphasized that independence from coalition partners should be increased.

22 February

The women's section was formed within the party. Its leader, Terézia Szilágyiné-Császár was assisted by a seven-member managing committee.

28 February

The KDNP considered the compensation bill submitted by the government unacceptable. They particularly dissatisfied with the upper limits on full and partial compensation.

26–27 March

The party's statutes were adopted and amended at the national board session. The newly elected executive board did not include János Birkás and Tamás Lukács. The system of associate chairman and executive board members was terminated. László Varga was elected as vice chairman. Deputy chairpersons included Tibor Füzessy (as faction leader), Géza Farkas, Miklós Hasznos, Miklós Pálós and Terézia Szilágyiné-Császár. According to the opinion adopted by the KDNP's general board session, the duties that the country was facing could only be accomplished after the termination of the moral crisis and if all forces, be they in governing position or not, work on renewing Hungary. They declared that the party intended to become a dominant political force upon the next elections.

7 May

At a press conference, the KDNP outlined the party's stance regarding the ownership of former church properties. Protection of the interests of the church was a key consideration.

July

The party's Rules of Organization and Operation was completed.

10 July

The government passed Act 32 of 1991 on settling the ownership of nationalized former church properties. In the parliamentary debate, the KDNP's stance was reflected in the draft amendments submitted by Tamás Lukács, Giczy György, Ferenc Inotay and Miklós Gáspár.

12 July

Emese Ugrin left the party and the parliamentary faction to join that of the FKgP. However, she did not return her parliamentary mandate she received from the KDNP's national list.

27 August

Tivadar Horváth (formerly SZDSZ) changed to the KDNP's parliamentary faction.

22 September

The statement issued after the national Christian democratic meeting held in Győr declared that the party is committed to Christian social values, consistently represents the interests of workers and pays special attention to the education of future generations.

4 November

On behalf of the party, faction leader Béla Csépe submitted a motion for amendment in the parliamentary debate on the bill on the compensation of those unrightfully deprived of their life and freedom due to political reasons. (The bill was passed in early 1992 as Act 32 of 1992 on the Compensation of Those Unrightfully Deprived of Their Life and Freedom due to Political Reasons.)

1992

19 January

At an extraordinary session, the KDNP executive board voiced its protestation against the effacement of religious programmes and demanded changes in the management of state-owned radio and television.

25 January

At the Managing Committee session, Géza Farkas deputy chairman resigned. The committee issued a statement demanding the immediate dismissal of the heads of state television and radio. They announced that the party is ready to join the MDF in a minority government if necessary.

29 February

At the meeting of the KDNP's county-level and local organization leaders, László Surján declared that the party is confident it would be in the coalition after the upcoming elections, too. He added that the party does not hold on to power and would feel comfortable in an opposition role, too.

2 March

József Mózs (formerly SZDSZ) joined the KDNP faction.

17 March

Owing to the debate between certain members of the KDNP's parliamentary faction and MP Gábor Balogh, the latter left the faction and sat in the bench of independent MPs. The debate was partly covered in the media, too. Balogh also resigned from his assignment as parliamentary notary.

25 March

The KDNP's Protestant Intellectual Workshop was established. Its first leader was state secretary Miklós Lukáts.

24–26 April

The KDNP's 1st congress was organized in Gödöllő. In preparation of the event, specialist working groups drafted studies in nine key national policy issues. These materials were converted into theses that were discussed at the congress. In his keynote address, chairman László Surján announced that the KDNP has 15,000 members in 600 organizations. He declared that a new party programme was needed (the programme was subsequently adopted on 25 April) and that the party's objective was to build a new social order based on morals and Christian values. He pointed out that Christians cannot be excluded from their basic rights: to establish political parties and to participate in politics. He was of the opinion that the KDNP's composed, disciplined but firm political style was drawing an increasing number of supporters throughout the country. He believed an economic policy turnaround was

necessary, along with the mitigation of crisis phenomena and their elimination as soon as possible. The theses discussed at the congress called on the government to pursue an enterprise-friendly economic policy instead of a monetary one. The resolutions passed at the congress laid the foundation for the 1994 election programme.

3 June

The KDNP proposed the change of the existing industry policies since the government's economic policy showed too many similarities with that of the past era. The KDNP called for a neutral monetary exchange rate policy.

18 June

Parliament elected KDNP faction leader Tibor Füzessy to the position of minister without portfolio responsible for civil secret services.

23 June

The KDNP's parliamentary faction nominated Béla Csépe against Nándor Rott as faction leader and the party's deputy chairman.

27 July

Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky appointed the KDNP's vice chairman, László Varga as ambassador extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary.

11 September

On behalf of the KDNP, Ferenc Inotay submitted a motion for amendment in the parliamentary debate of the bill on protecting fetal life. (Act 79 of 1992 adopted on 4 December 1992 did not fully reflect the party's stance.)

24 October

The Barankovics Academy announced its education, publishing and research programme aimed at improving domestic political culture. The first study week-end was organized in Leányfalu on 3–6 November.

22 November

Delegates speaking at the KDNP's national board session expressed their view that the party must have national and local programmes by 1994. In order to be successful at the upcoming elections, firmer policies and greater self-confidence is required in addition to internal unity. The KDNP's executive board was extended with six regional members representing Christian democratic organizations from 19 counties. The regional members were as follows: János Birkás (Hajdú and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties), György Katona (Győr, Vas, Komárom, Fejér and Veszprém counties), Kálmán Kovács (Csongrád, Békés and Bács), Gyula Mészáros (Pest, Heves and Nógrád), Miklós Rusznák (Borsod and Szabolcs) and János Ursprung (Baranya, Tolna, Somogy and Zala). György Rubovszky joined the executive board as

managing secretary. The Core Principles of the Christian Democratic People's Party, a document adopted and amended by the congress that outlined the party's political ideology was released on the previous day.

November 30.

Péter Kádár (formerly SZDSZ) joined the parliamentary faction of the Christian Democratic People's Party.

1993

7 January

The KDNP's executive board proposed that the State Audit Office should carry out a thorough inspection of the State Property Agency's privatization activities and submit findings to the parliament. The party was of the opinion that only few people benefitted from privatization and the sale of national assets while a lot of property was acquired by foreigners at a very low price.

February

In order to save domestic jobs and to protect Hungary's food industry, the KDNP announced the Domestic Product-Domestic Jobs movement. Seeing the success of the initiative and to support participants, the party set up a foundation.

1 May

Ákos Gali (former MDF and later independent MP) joined the KDNP's parliamentary faction.

6 May

On the KDNP's initiative, the Military Prosecutor General's Office ordered a fact-finding investigation of retaliation fusillades in 1956.

1 June

Károly Eke, a formerly independent MP joined the KDNP's parliamentary faction.

19 June

The KDNP's 3rd National Convention outlined that the party's duty was to serve the cause of Christianity both nationally and internationally as Christians consider politics the work of human activities. Members supported the party's participation in government. The convention called for the inclusion of economic stimulus measures into the following year's budget programme, giving priority to infrastructure development and assistance to underdeveloped areas, otherwise the KDNP would not vote for it.

August 16.

A Christian democratic – Christian socialist platform was established within the National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MSZOSZ). The main objective of the platform was to connect union members following Christian values and to promote representation by ideological stand both locally and at national level.

30 August

The KDNP's parliamentary faction did not support the land law in the form as it was at the time because it enabled foreigners to buy land in Hungary and did not put a cap on owning landed property.

6 September

In the opinion of the KDNP's faction, the financial difficulties of churches should be regulated in a comprehensive law, but formerly nationalized assets to be returned to churches should be capped as full return would constitute reprivatisation and trigger social tensions.

18 September

The test issue of Kereszténydemokrata Futár (Christian Democratic Courier), an unofficial periodical of the KDNP and its parliamentary faction was released. (Release of the four-page publication was terminated in 1997 and restarted in 2004)

16 November

János Latorcai, elected as minister for industry and trade on 24 February 1993, confirmed his joining the Christian Democratic People's Party. He said he intended to participate in the elaboration of the party's economic policy in the capacity of an expert but had no ambition for assuming any senior position or political function within the party.

30 November

A plaque on the house at Galamb utca 5 unveiled, commemorating the KNDP's foundation.

22 December

The KDNP called for talks among political parties to provide for the representation of ethnicities in parliament because they deemed it to be of fundamental importance regarding the constitution and social peace.

1994

19 January

The KDNP's executive board put together the national list of the party's candidates for parliament, with László Surján, the party's prime minister candidate leading the list. Except for László Surján and Béla Csépe, all candidates were also nominated as individual candidates.

6 February

At a meeting held in Dobogókő, the KDNP's local government leaders declared that the law on local governments provides for the constitutional rights of these bodies but it still needs to be updated. They rejected that the formerly removed fund allocation role of counties is gradually "smuggled back", but they supported headcount reduction as work became more efficient.

8 February

Nándor Rott left the faction of the Christian Democratic People's Party and joined that of the FKgP.

13 February

At the party's campaign launch rally in Szeged, László Surján said the general government retreated to fast from its overly extensive duties, allowing problems to fall on society overnight. The KDNP promised predictable legislation, security and a calculable future, along with an amendment to the constitution to enable direct election by the people of the president of the republic.

24 March

Péter Harrach, the KDNP's church policy coordinator said that the mission of churches is universal, thus it is an obligation for them to address issues of moral judgement and social problems without asking for a role in politics.

29 May

In the second round of the elections, the KDNP received 5.7% of votes and gained 22 mandates (3 in individual constituencies, 5 from regional lists and 14 from the national list). Béla Csépe, Tibor Füzessy, Miklós Gáspár, Giczy György, Hasznos Miklós, Tamás Isépy, István Ivanics, Sándor Keresztes, Kálmán Kovács, János Latorcai, Gyula Mészáros, Miklós Rusznák, Miklós Pálos, György Rubovszky, Zsolt Semjén, László Surján, Ferenc Szakál, Terézia Szilágyiné Császár and László Varga obtained their mandates from party lists. Mandates from individual constituencies were won by Dénes Pálfi in Zala County, Gábor Leitner in Pest County and András Rapcsák in Csongrád County.

2 June

Terézia Szilágyiné Császár resigned as deputy chairwoman because she believed the party needed new leaders, notably from the new members of parliament.

4 June

At the two-day session of the KDNP's parliamentary faction in Dobogókő, Tibor Füzessy was elected as faction leader.

21 June

An agreement was reached at parliament on the allocation of parliamentary positions. The KDNP received a deputy speaker and two parliamentary notary positions.

25 June

Chairman László Surján was re-elected at the KDNP's national board session. Up to the next national board session, the party was governed by a five-member executive board instead of the former 13-member body (now comprising a chairman, a vice chairman, 3 deputy chairmen and the leader of the parliamentary faction). Attila Csenger-Zalán was elected as new member of the executive board. Mikola István, György Giczy and János Latorcai were deputy chairmen. According to László Surján, the election results were regarded as a failure and the party's renewal was named as the most important task. Renewal called for both personnel-related and organizational changes.

16 September

The KDNP proposed János Latorcai as candidate for mayor of Budapest. On 27 October, the Budapest boards of the MDF, the KDNP and Fidesz approved Latorcai as a joint candidate. Further, the three parties set up a joint opposition list for the local government elections.

5 November

The KDNP voiced concerns that in respect of privatization, the government focused on generating a quick cash inflow. János Latorcai pointed out that they party condemned the full privatization of strategically important companies.

12 December

Turnout at the local government elections was 43%, 3% higher than in 1990. The Christian democrats obtained 44 mayor positions and 428 representative mandates.

1995

29 January

György Giczy was elected as the KDNP's new chairman. At the re-election session of the national board, he received 211 votes while 189 delegates voted for the former chairman. Tibor Füzessy was elected as executive managing vice. A panel of five deputy chairmen was set up to assist the chairman, comprising Miklós Gáspár, Péter Harrach, Zsuzsanna Mizsei, Miklós Pálos and László Surján.

18 February

At a press conference held during the interval of the KDNP's executive board meeting, György Giczy said the KDNP would reach out to those parties that want Christian democracy to gain ground in Hungary. Tibor Füzessy was of the opinion that the party's renewal would take a long time. Both of them underscored their view that cooperation of the civic opposition parties was non-existent even at county level.

19 February

The KDNP's parliamentary faction elected Tamás Isépy as leader. Initially, he accepted the assignment for one year only. His deputy was Béla Csépe. At his press conference, Isépy promised to strengthen expert work at parliament. He believed the establishment of a joint group of opposition expert to harmonize the drafting of laws was a possibility.

13 June

At the final parliamentary voting on ratifying the basic treaty between Slovakia and Hungary, KDNP MPs cast a "no" vote.

17 June

At the first session of the KDNP's new National Board, János Latorcai was elected as chairman of the board.

8 October

At a forum held in Torniosnémeti, György Giczy said that "The KDNP is now on the rise because voters see that the party is now a new and independent political force that one can vote for, while formerly it seemed to be a branch of the MDF only".

1996

13 January

The KDNP assumed that the government would spend the HUF 100-200 billion additional revenues from privatization on debt reduction. The party proposed that these funds should be spent on a housing programme or on the convergence of under-developed regions instead.

26 January

György Fekete, a former MDF MP and former state secretary joined the KDNP faction effective April. (He left the MDF in the autumn and was an independent MP since then.)

14 February

Tamás Isépy remained the leader of the KDNP's parliamentary faction. Faction members who left the session early held a separate press conference. They accused the parliamentary group of representing the interests of Civic Alliance supporters only instead of representing the entire KDNP.

14 April

An ad-hoc committee began working within the KDNP charged with revealing the reason that triggered internal disputes within the party. The three-member committee was led by József Gärtner. He said their main duty was to assess the work of the party's disciplinary and ethical committee. The committee was suspected to have created disciplinary or ethical issues out of political debates.

16 April

By secret vote, Tibor Füzessy was elected by MPs as deputy parliamentary speaker.

27 April

György Giczy recommended that opposition parties should cooperate. In order to elaborate the details of such cooperation, the KDNP was to start bilateral talks with each opposition party, not intending to exclude any of them.

8 June

The KDNP's National Board did not extend the mandates of party officials with two years up to the next local government elections. The statutes were amended, too.

27 August

Tamás Isépy handed over a submission signed by 89 opposition and independent MPs, asking for the convening of an extraordinary parliamentary session about the basic treaty between Hungary and Romania. He also attached a draft resolution signed by the faction leaders of the MDF, the KDNP and Fidesz, calling on the government to seek further talks on the matter and to make the signing of the treaty subject to parliamentary approval.

9 September

The KDNP turned to the Court of Constitution because several sections of the higher education act contradict with the effective fundamental law. Gábor Jobbágyi complained that that contrary to the practice of modern democracies, the law excluded the pursuance and teaching of theology from academic areas.

18 September

The chairmen of MDF, KDNP and Fidesz agreed that the agreement of all three parties will be required if any other party wish to join their cooperation.

13 October

The election campaign within the KDNP was launched for the party chairman position. Current party chairman György Giczy was challenged by János Latorcai, chairman of the KDNP's National Board.

14 December

The KDNP's National Board re-elected György Giczy as party chairman with 158 of the 186 votes cast. At the beginning of the session, 23 delegates left, 188 remained. The following day the members of the factions were asked to submit a motion of no confidence against Tamás Isépy and the faction leader was called on to resign.

1997

7 January

In the lawsuit initiated by Tamás Isépy and four fellow MPs, the court of first instance, the Municipal Court of Budapest nullified the KDNP executive board resolution on convening the re-election board and all resolutions of the National Board session held on 14-15 December.

11 January

The Christian democratic representatives of six counties (Borsod, Csongrád, Veszprém, Vas, Nógrád and Zala) and the cities of Hódmezővásárhely and Balassagyarmat regarded Latorcai as chairman of the national board and distanced themselves from conduct that damages the party's reputation.

12 February

Sándor Keresztes and László Varga, KDNP MPs and former DNP members began organizing a Barankovics platform. Their objective was to restore the party's unity, democratic operation and leadership. They questioned the legitimacy of the existing leaders. The KDNP executive board declared that the views of the platform that became public to date hazarded the party's unity and policies, and terminated the platform effective 8 March.

15 February

At a National Board session, 75% of the 254 delegates, i.e. 186 members were in attendance. Behind closed doors, they adopted the national executive board's submission proposing the assignment of the executive board to comprehensively settle the party's debts, potentially including the sale of the party headquarters building.

8 March

The EUCD undertook a mediator role to settle the dispute between various groups within the KDNP. In Budapest, Wim van Velzen announced that a meeting scheduled for the following weekend abroad would be attended by János Latorcai, Tamás Isépy, László Surján and László Varga. Giczy György did not confirm his attendance yet.

10 March

The parliamentary faction confirmed Tamás Isépy as faction leader after he asked for a no confidence vote against himself.

22 March

János Latorcai said he was willing to give up his candidacy for party chairman if György Giczy does the same. He stressed that ensuring the party's unity and proper functioning was more important for him than to become party chairman.

22 April

György Giczy confirmed: on the request of the EUCD's chairman, they made a verbal declaration on 21 April that the KDNP did not intend to cooperate in any form with MIÉP on the upcoming elections, but the executive board had no right to interfere with connections at

the local party organization level. He said the EUCD was promoting an MDF–Fidesz–KDNP alliance and that in the long run he would not rule out the FKgP's participation either.

28 April

A Superior Court ruling declared that the KDNP's executive board resolution on convening the National Board must be nullified, along with the resolutions made at said body's December session and that the re-election of KDNP officials must be repeated because several sections of the statutes were violated. György Giczy described the ruling as intervention with the party's internal matters.

14 MPs (Béla Csépe, Tamás Isépy, István Ivanics, Keresztes Sándor, Kálmán Kovács, János Latorcai, Gábor Leitner, Gyula Mészáros, Dénes Pálfi, András Rapcsák, György Rubovszky, Zsolt Semjén, László Surján and László Varga) sent a letter to György Giczy calling for his resignation.

2 May

According to the joint stance developed at a meeting of the KDNP's county leaders and national board, a national board session to re-elect party officials should be held by the end of June in order to settle legal disputes as soon as possible. János Latorcai stressed that the party's elected officials cannot be revoked until the definite term of their assignment expires. For 8 May, he convened the Executive Board that had been in office in December and that was declared legit again by the Superior Court ruling.

13 May

At their press conference, deputy chairman Péter Harrach and Zsolt Semjén said that the KDNP's current crisis may lead to the party's split. As the two sides within the party's senior bodies are unlikely to reach an agreement, new leaders must be found to steer the party.

21 June

In the contest for the party leadership at the re-election of KDNP officials, Zsolt Semjén received 102 votes, thus György Giczy remained chairman thanks to the 133 votes he received. The next day Zsuzsanna Mizsei was elected as chairwoman of the national board and Zsolt Semjén, Miklós Gáspár, Miklós Pálos, Gábor Báthory and János Ursprung were elected as deputy chairmen. The statutes were amended, entitling the party chairman to exclude members from the party. No stance was taken regarding the MDF's initiative to unite the parliamentary factions. The leaders of group opposing Giczy's policies announced they would not leave the faction for the time being and would wait to see what policies he would follow.

7 July

The majority of the parliamentary faction condemned Tamás Isépy's exclusion from the party.

14 July

The European Christian Democratic Union (EUCD) excluded the KDNP from the organization because the party broke all promises and continued to cooperate with nationalistic parties.

15 July

After an amendment of the statutes, the majority of the parliamentary faction considered Tibor Füzessy excluded from that group. Thus he also lost his position as deputy parliamentary speaker. Miklós Hasznos and Miklós Gáspár were also considered excluded from the faction.

21 July

The banned Barankovics platform continued operations under the Christian Democratic Alliance name, outside the KDNP. None of the independent MPs joined the KDNP's faction thus it was expected to be terminated legally.

25 July

Tamás Isépy announced that the KDNP's parliamentary faction ceased to exist.

18 August

The moderate members of the dissolved faction wanted to join either the Fidesz or the MDF faction. Giczy's supporters joined the independents. (In late August and early September, 11 former members of the faction requested admittance to the Fidesz's parliamentary faction then signed an accession agreement with them.)

30 August

The 1st national convention of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance (Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség – MKDSZ) adopted its statutes on 17 August and elected László Surján as chairman. They also issued a statement on the cooperation of political parties sharing similar political views.

1 September

Isépy submitted the application of 11 former KDNP MPs to Fidesz. The Committee for Constitutional Affairs approved the MPs' change of factions on 17 September, having found them compliant with the rules of parliament.

3 September

The KDNP executive board called on their MPs intending to change for the Fidesz faction to resign from their mandates. The board considered it unacceptable that MPs elected by Christian democrats would represent alien interests in another fraction.

23 September

Tamás Isépy and János Latorcai were elected as deputy leaders of the Fidesz faction.

16 October

Fidesz and the MKDSZ signed an agreement on nominating joint candidates at the elections, on adding the candidates of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance on the regional and national list of Fidesz and on cooperation at local government elections.

25 October

At the national board session, Zsolt Semjén and Sándor Keresztes resigned as deputy chairmen and suspended their party membership because ineligible attendees were allowed to vote while eligible participants were excluded from voting. The national council voted for concluding an election alliance with the FKgP and rejected cooperation with Fidesz and the thought of a Christian Democratic Union by a large majority. The resolution declared that the KDNP would only cooperate with the MDF in the second round of the elections.

13 December

The KDNP's national board session elected Tibor Füzessy as executive vice chairman and György Fekete and Miklós Hasznos as deputy chairmen.

1998

3 January

15 county chairmen excluded from the party declared that their key objective was to renew the KDNP. Declaring their exclusion unlawful they announced they would sue party leaders again.

11 January

In Budapest, a new group was formed under the name National Reform Circle of Hungarian Christian Democrats. Functioning as an association, the organization represented the supporters of reform within the KDNP. They planned to participate in politics together with the MDF and the MKDSZ.

26 January

The EUCD chairman called the cooperation of the MDF, Fidesz and the MKDSZ (the latter led by László Surján) exemplary. According to Wim van Velzen, it was desirable to have a significant national liberal-conservative party in the European Parliament beside a strong socialist party.

February

The KDNP's election programme titled "We are the Party of Families" was issued. The programme of the MKDSZ was published simultaneously to that. The title of their draft was "Healthy society – balanced growth".

11 February

György Giczy and József Torgyán signed the two party's cooperation agreement regarding the upcoming elections. This cooperation was much looser than formerly planned. There was no joint list and there were no joint candidates. The two parties would just help each other in the campaign and agreed to revoke candidates in the second round if the other party's candidate performed better in the first round.

4 April

Pursuant to a decision by KDNP executive bodies, György Giczy was the first name on the party's national list, followed by Tibor Füzessy and Zsuzsanna Mizsei. The party could nominate a regional list in every region but they were not able to nominate candidates in each Budapest constituency as they could not collect a sufficient number of support tickets.

11 May

The KDNP was one of the four parties that were eligible for financial support from the state (as they reached the minimum threshold of 1% of votes) even though they did not make it to the parliament. In the first election round held on 10 May, KDNP candidates received 2.59% of total valid votes and 0.31% in the second round on 24 May.)

8 July

MKDSZ vice chairman Péter Harrach appointed as Minister for Social and Family Affairs.

13 June

The KDNP's national board re-elected György Giczy as chairman. His contestant, Miklós Gáspár was a member of the eight-member executive committee.

12 October

Party chairman György Giczy said that a creation of a new platform within the KDNP by supporters of the Christian Social Movement would not be fortunate. Pursuant to the new statutes approved on 26 September, only the party congress can approve a new platform but it would only convene in 2002.

1999

12 March

Hungary became a fully entitled member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (The country was invited to join NATO at the organization's 8-9 February 1997 meeting)

17 September

MKDSZ chairman László Surján and Viktor Orbán signed the cooperation agreement of Fidesz and MKDSZ, underscoring that they would nominate joint candidates at the next parliamentary elections.

2000

5 February

The Legitimate Christian Democratic People Party (Törvényes Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt) was founded. László Varga was elected as chairman, the executive board comprised Zoltán K. Kovács, András Rapcsák and György Szakolczai as well. They declared that they regarded the 21 June 1997 National Board as the KDNP's legitimate board.

4 November

The organization calling itself the Legitimate KDNP elected a new executive board and a chairman (László Varga). Members were of the opinion that the KDNP's credibility was damaged seriously by the group led by György Giczy.

9 December

At the 3rd party elections of the MKDSZ, László Surján and Péter Harrach were elected co-chairmen with a view to the increased workload and preparation for the elections.

2001

24 May

Pursuant to the agreement concluded by the MKDSZ and Fidesz for the elections, the 24 founding members of the MKDSZ will be nominated at the 2002 elections as joint candidates.

19 May

The KDNP's national board decided that the party should join the moderate right wing in Hungarian politics, thereby shaking György Giczy's position in the party. He resigned effective 9 June because the national board did not support cooperation with the "historical" Social Democratic Party and the Christian Social Union. After amending the statutes, Tivadar Bartók who served as general secretary at the time was elected KDNP chairman by a large majority.

30 June

The KDNP called for the creation of an alliance of centre right parties with MDF, MDNP and non-governmental organizations for the 2002 elections.

29 November

The MDNP, the KDNP, the Third Side for Hungary Association (Harmadik Oldal Magyarországért Egyesület) and the Alliance of Green Democrats (Zöld Demokraták Szövetsége) established a new party under the name Centrum – Unity for Hungary (Összefogás Magyarországért Centrum – ÖMC). Party chairman Mihály Kupa declared that they are not an election party and wish to cooperate in the long run to halt the damaging process that politics are determined by the exclusive will of two large parties.

1 December

At its Budapest congress, the KDNP allowed its members to join the ÖMC. The statutes were modified accordingly, enabling double membership and thus the participation of KDNP members in the new party.

2002

27 May

A Christian Democratic section was established within the Fidesz's parliamentary faction, with Viktor Orbán assuming the patron's role. Deputy faction leader Tamás Isépy stressed: the section was created with the objective of implementing a civic Hungary that rests on Christian-conservative-national-liberal ideas and values.

2 November

László Varga, member of the MKDSZ executive board and MP of Fidesz was elected chairman of the party by the KDNP's national board that also adopted the new statutes of the Historical Christian Democratic People's Party as well. Pursuant to the Superior Court ruling of 26 September 2002, the board repeated the KDNP National Board Session of 21–22 June 1997 since the court ruling identified violations of laws in the decisions made at the referenced 1997 session. A temporary executive board was elected for one year, comprising vice chairmen Péter Harrach, István Mikola and Semjén Zsolt along with deputy chairmen János Latorcai, Tamás Básthly and László Nógrádi.

16 November

A decision was made on establishing a committee to pave the way for making the cooperation of Fidesz-MPP and KDNP official. The KDNP delegated István Mikola, Péter Harrach and János Latorcai to the committee.

2003

15 January

The Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance and the Smallholders' Civic Alliance (Kisgazda Polgári Egyesület) welcomed Viktor Orbán's vision of a union party. Péter Harrach said that the MKDSZ was thinking in terms of a union right from the start.

March 25.

The Superior Court declared that László Varga was legitimately registered as KDNP chairman.

28 June

The KDNP's National Board elected Zsolt Semjén chairman to succeed László Varga who passed away on 17 May.

30 June

Harrach Péter said it would not be feasible for Christian democrats in the Fidesz faction to establish an own faction before the end of that year.

6 December

At the KDNP's National Board Session held to elect officials, Zsolt Semjén was re-elected chairman and János Latorcai was elected chairman of the national board. The vice chairman post was not filled. The seven-member panel of deputy chairmen comprised MKDSZ politicians. The party enables double membership for members of Hungarian sister parties in the European Union (Fidesz, MDF).

2004

April

An agreement was signed legitimizing double KDNP-Fidesz membership.

1 May

Thirteen years after signing the association agreement (16 December 1991), Hungary became a member of the European Union.

11 May

The KDNP also joined the faction alliance called Hungarian Solidarity Alliance (Magyar Szolidaritás Szövetség) led by Fidesz. The related contract regulated the nomination of joint candidates at the elections for the European Parliament and at the 2006 parliamentary elections in Hungary. Christian democrats delegated one representative to each of the 176 constituency councils.

May 23.

A congress was held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the revived KDNP.

2005

19 February

At the MKDSZ's national convention of delegates, Viktor Orbán announced the establishment of a National Consultation Council.

21 May

The National Board Session of the Christian Democratic People's Party welcomed the KDNP's return to parliament after Mátyás Firtl won the interim elections in Sopron on 9 May. It was generally believed that the KDNP's programme would make family-based taxation an option for families with children and would help provide equal opportunities for mothers and single parents.

2006

12 January

Viktor Orbán and Zsolt Semjén signed the document about the joint election lists of the two parties, enabling the KDNP to name 24 of the joint candidates in 176 individual constituencies. The agreement also covered joint candidates for the local government elections and for mayor of Budapest.

25 March

Zsolt Semjén said the KDNP was never stronger. Speaking at the party's national convention, the chairman added that based on their weight in parliament, the KDNP was the third largest party in Hungary.

26 April

The KDNP wants to have an own faction. This was announced by Zsolt Semjén after talks with Viktor Orbán, since the news of this plan had been leaked the day before. The chairman also announced that Fidesz and KDNP would participate jointly in the local government elections in the autumn. Christian democrats could set up their own faction after that.

29 April

The KDNP executive board appoints a three-member delegation to pursue negotiations with Fidesz about establishing an independent KDNP faction. The MKDSZ would be reintegrated into the KDNP and would later transform into a cultural association that supports the party.

8 May

At the Fidesz-KDNP faction alliance meeting, Zsolt Semjén was appointed KDNP faction leader. He assumed the assignment for one year. The KDNP faction was established with 23 members, with one additional MP joining on 11 May. The names in the faction were as follows: Tamás Báthly, András Deák (after his passing, he was succeeded by Bence Rétvári who won an individual mandate at the interim election in the related constituency), Mátyás Firtl, János Hargitai, Péter Harrach, Rózsa Hoffmann, László Kuzma, Erzsébet Lanczendorfer, János Latorcai, Tamás Lukács, László Medgyasszay, Béla Molnár, Attila Móring, Andor Nagy, Kálmán Nagy, László Nógrádi, Tivadar Puskás, György Rubovszky, László Salamon, Zsolt Semjén, István Simicskó, Miklós Soltész and László Szászfalvi.

24 May

The KDNP requested one deputy speaker position, one parliamentary notary and one committee chairman position in the new parliament. Zsolt Semjén said the KDNP was open for discussions with the government but they were preparing for a firm and relentless opposition role. On 9 June, Péter Harrach was elected deputy speaker of parliament.

27 June

The Parliamentary Committee for Cultural and Media Affairs unanimously agreed that the executive boards of curatoria overseeing public media, the board of the media authority and the advisory board of MTI (the Hungarian News Agency) must be supplemented with members delegated by the KDNP.

7 July

The KDNP voted against the introduction of tuition [at public universities] in Hungary, calling the idea a crime against Hungarian youth. The party called on the public to protest the plan as tuition would close the door to professional careers for young Hungarians.

31 July

The KDNP requested a Court of Constitution opinion because the party believed certain rules of Hungary's pension system are gravely discriminative.

17 December

Zsolt Semjén was re-elected party chairman for another four years by the KDNP's national board.

2007

9 May

By majority vote, the Parliamentary Committee on the Budget rejected the bill on family-based income taxation submitted by KDNP MPs.

14 May

After 10 years, the European People's Party that earlier merged with the European Union of Christian Democrats admitted the KDNP, Hungary's third largest party with 17,000, as its member.

2008

19 February

The Israelite Political Workshop was established within the Barankovics Foundation.

14 October

KDNP chairman Zsolt Semjén said he would attend the national summit initiated by Ferenc Gyurcsány for 18 October, but he also added that the public law significance of the related proposals was quite vague.

2009

7 May

The Christian Democratic People's Party submitted a bill to parliament on the bankruptcy protection of families.

7 June

At the European Parliamentary elections, the joint Fidesz-KDNP list won 14 of the 22 positions allocated to Hungary in the European Parliament. Turnout at the elections was 36%, the Fidesz-KDNP list received 56.4% of votes.

2010

5 May

The factions preparing for the inaugural session of parliament managed to reach an agreement that there would be five deputy speakers of the House: On 14 May, in representation of the KDNP, János Latorcai was elected as deputy speaker of parliament. Péter Harrach became the party's faction leader.

29 May

The government was formed and sworn in. KDNP chairman Zsolt Semjén was appointed minister without portfolio. Using the entitlement as per the amended constitution, the prime minister appointed two deputy prime ministers on 1 June, naming Zsolt Semjén first deputy prime minister charged with national policy and church affairs. In the government, the party was represented by six state secretaries. Out of the 263 MPs of the party alliance, 36 joined the KDNP's independent parliamentary faction. Faction members: András Aradszki, Gábor Bagdy, Tamás Básthy, Balázs Bús, Mátyás Firtl, László Földi, László Habis, János Hargitai, Péter Harrach (faction leader), Pál Hoffman, Rózsa Hoffmann, András Kalmár, Ottó Karvalics, Erzsébet Lanczendorfer, János Latorcai, Tamás Lukács, József Michl, Attila Móring, Andor Nagy, Kálmán Nagy, István Pálffy, Tivadar Puskás, Bence Rétvári, György Rubovszky, László Salamon (his mandate from the list went to Gergely Gaal), Tamás Sáringer-Kenyeres, Zsolt Semjén, Miklós Seszták, Oszkár Seszták, István Simicskó, Miklós Soltész, Endre Spaller, László Szászfalvi, Richárd Tarnai, László Varga and Imre Vejkey.

15 October

The new General Assembly of Budapest was formed. On the initiative of Budapest mayor István Tarlós, an agreement was signed, allocating the leadership position of four of the eight committees to opposition politicians. The deputy mayors were elected almost unanimously, with KDNP's Gábor Bagdy among them, charged with finances.

18 December

The National Board of the Christian Democratic People's Party re-elected Zsolt Semjén, minister without portfolio as party chairman. The national board confirmed the alliance with Fidesz and announced the establishment of a harmonization committee for settling minor disputes. Bence Rétvári, Péter Harrach, Ferenc Kalmár, Gábor Bagdy, István Simicskó, Miklós Seszták and László Surján were elected as deputy chairmen while János Latorcai was re-elected as chairman of the national board.

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