

ENIKÓ A. SAJTI

THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SITUATION OF THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN YUGOSLAVIA 1918–1941

Between the 8th and 21st November, 1918, the Serbian and the Allied Forces occupied the area of Bánát, Bácska, and Baranya, and on 25. November the Great Slav Parliament in Újvidék declared the separation of these territories from Hungary and their union with the Serbian Kingdom. The military treaty signed on 13. November, 1918 in Belgrade, which had delegated the civilian administration of Voivodina (Délvidék) to the jurisdiction of the "local authorities", by the end of November became mere fiction.¹ The Yugoslavian military authorities were beginning the "nationalisation" of Voivodina with great impetus. This did not only mean the quick reduction of the Hungarian local administration and the conscious breaking of the political power of the Hungarians, but also the conscious crushing of Hungarian economic and cultural positions as well.²

The influence of the change of national status on the economic situation of the Hungarians

In the post-war years, not only the economic hardships inflicting the whole country, – among them the decline of industrial production, the shortage of certain products, the discontinuation of old commercial relations, the requisitions, the inflation, and the introduction of the new currency, the dinar – created an especially difficult situation for Voivodina, but also the economic policy dictated to this area by Belgrade. This economic policy was governed by two obvious aims: on the one hand to shift the burden of the economic policy of the new state and the reconstruction of the economy of Yu-

¹ The complete text of the treaty is published in *Zapisni sa sednica delegaciji Kraljevine SHS na mirovnoj konferenciji u Parizu 1919–1920*. Priredili Bogdan KRIZMAN, Bogumil HRABAK. Beograd 1960. 311–312. A detailed discussion of the question in ORMOS Mária: *A belgrádi katonai konvencióról. Történelmi Szemle*, 1979. 1. 12–38. By the same author: *Padovától Trianonig 1918–1920*. Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1983. 60–74.

² The first article of the Belgrade Convention, which declared that on the territories under Allied rule the civil administration would remain at the local authorities, was interpreted by the Hungarian government that it was still responsible for the administration of Voivodina. The Great National Council in Újvidék, on the other hand, as legislative power, delegated the administration of these parts to a local government: the Bácska, Bánát, Baranya National Directorate (Nemzeti Igazgatóság).

goslavia, which suffered major economic and human losses, to Voivodina and, parallel to this, break the earlier economic dominance of the Hungarians, or the way it was put then: to nationalise the economic life of the area.

After the occupation, one of the first measures of the National Directorate (Nemzeti Igazgatóság) was the seizure of "alien" properties, and later their nationalization. By 1922, there were hardly any monetary institutions or companies owned by Hungarians left. The way it was achieved was that the properties of those who had not been the inhabitants of the occupied territories were taken away automatically, and the local Hungarian owners – using as pretext a decree that is unknown to date – were forced to elect reliable Serbians into the administrative boards of the monetary institutions and companies. If this procedure was refused, a government commissary was appointed, the costs of which had to be financed by the company itself.³ Serbian was made compulsory as the language of business, thus many were forced to hire Serbian speakers "in their own interest". Stock corporations owned by minority groups could only increase their capital if the majority of the shares was in the possession of Serbians. Craftsmen's associations were dissolved, new elections were ordered and it was given who the new officials should be. By the end of the 1920's – in spite of Budapest's support – the 168 banks, bank branches, savings banks, credit unions earlier owned by Hungarians had gone bankrupt or had been repossessed by Serbians. This was the result of the recession and the nationalisation as well as the fact that first the demarcation line, later the border separated them from their earlier links with Budapest and Vienna. Small local credit unions, – originally their number was 150 in Bácska, Bánát and Baranya – initially joined the Central Credit Union of Torontál County (Torontálmegyei Központi Hitelszövetkezet, TKH), which was still Hungarian owned. This was possible because entitled by a political decision, the National Commercial and Credit Bank (Országos Kereskedelmi és Hitelbank) authorised the TKH to enforce payment of their claims. Although it did not have the desired results, it could still save 80 old credit unions in the 1920's. In spite of this, however, the financial situation of these credit unions – unlike the German credit unions in Bánát – could not be helped on the long run.⁴ By the end of the 1920's, it was no longer possible for the Hungarian government to provide the life-saving 30 million dinars necessary for the consolidation of the monetary situation because of the serious financial problems of Hungary itself, and in the 1930's Budapest completely stopped supporting the Hungarian credit unions.⁵ The hardships on the credit scene were, however, not limited to the minorities in Yugoslavia. Especially during the recession, interest rates became extremely disadvantageous in general, credits were restricted, while illegal interest rates soared.

³ Magyar Országos Levéltár (from now on MOL) K-437. Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége Központjának iratai. 1922-8-732; 532.

⁴ German credit unions formed their own centre in the Bánát, Agraria, in 1923.

⁵ MOL, K-437 1928-5-262

The Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian state – keeping its promise made during the war – began the execution of the agrarian reform already at the beginning of 1919 (thus before the decisions clarifying the legal situation of the territory). On the basis of Regent Alexander's proclamation of 6 January 1919, in which he promised a "just" solution to the land question, the abolishment of the remnants of serfdom, and the elimination of the large estates, on 25–27 February, the decrees that were to prepare the agrarian reform were published. But even before these decrees, the military began the seizure of the estates of the Catholic church at several locations. Frederick Habsburg's estate in Baranya, the 110.000 hectare Bellye estate along with the sugar factory on its territory were sequestered, as well as lands owned by Hungarian banks and companies.⁶ The basic intention of the agrarian reform that was aimed at the unification of the agricultural structure of the country was to spread the Serbian smallholder estate structure to the territory of the whole country, but already from the beginning also had nationalistic tendencies, even though the decrees themselves did not contain explicit anti-minority clauses. However, as only those with a citizenship could obtain land, because of the opportunity of option for citizenship, Hungarians were excluded from this initially.

The property situation in Bácska and Bánát was characterised by an odd duality: on the hand it was characterised by the dominance of the Hungarian (in Bácska), and the Hungarian and German (in Bánát) large estate, and at the same time in both areas also by the high proportion of Hungarians among those who did not own any land. The original decree applied to estates larger than 200 "holds" (1 hold = 0.57 hectares), but depending on local circumstances it made it possible to nationalize 100 to 500 "hold" large estates. On the basis of this, originally 410 large estates fell into this category in Bácska, 42.55 % of these being local authority property, 39.86 % private property, while 8.3 % church property. The rest was owned 4–1 % by the Hungarian state, towns and land communities, banks and foundations. 48.62 % of the landed property falling under the regulations of the agrarian reform was owned by Hungarians, 21.67% by Germans; 8.39% by Serbians, 7.76 % Jews, the rest by Italians (6.87%), Croatians (6.63%), and Rumanians (0.06%)⁷ On the other hand, because of economic considerations, a decree was issued against the alienation and mortgaging of large estates in July 1919. In Voivodina, which had a developed agriculture, the large estates which would fall un-

⁶ For more details about this issue see: MILIVOJE Erić: *Agrarna reforma u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941*. Sarajevo, 1958; Nikola L. GAČEŠA: *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Bačkoj 1918–1941*. Novi Sad, 1968; by the same author: *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Banatu 1919–1941*. Novi Sad, 1972. Archduke Frederic appealed to the International Court in the Hague about the nationalization of his estates. In his appeal he asked for the right to return to his estate. Živko AVRAMOVSKI: *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslavije. Godišnji izveštaji Britanskog poslanstva u Beogradu 1921–1938*. Knj. 1 Annual report 1928. 514; Annual report 1929, 606–607, Annual report 1930. 659.

⁷ Nikola L. GAČEŠA: *Prilog proučavanju agrarno-posedovne strukture i agrarnih prilika u Vojvodini u vreme stvaranja Jugoslavije. Naučni skup u povodu 50- godišnjice raspada Austro-Ugarske Monarhije i stvaranja Jugoslovenske države*. Zagreb, 1969. 278.

der the scope of the agrarian reform were limited to larger estates bigger than 300 "holds" if it was plough-land, and 500 "holds" if it was any other category. As a result of this, the number of estates that were included in the reform decreased. Originally, the agrarian reform was going to effect 942.969 "hold" land (542.646 hectares), from which eventually 336.886 holds were given to 90.505 interested parties, in other words only 35% of the land available on the basis of the decree was distributed. The rest remained in the possession of the original landowners.

On the basis of the land reform, originally large estates between 100 and 500 hectares were to be distributed, later land that was allowed to remain in the property of the landowners was defined as between 174 and 869 hectares. Local claimers got 173.824 "holds" of the distributed land, less than 3 "holds" on average. The South Slav settlers were given 7 "hold" land, volunteers 8 "holds" on the average. Settlers and volunteers were given tax exemptions for a long period and later tax concessions, they also received considerable financial state support for the equipping of their farms. The "dobrovoljac" (volunteers in World War I.) were resettled in Voivodina from the agriculturally passive areas of Serbia, Crna Gora and Bosnia. Hungarians and Germans without any landed property did not get any land. Although the data are quite diverse about the national division of the land owned by small holders, according to the data most accepted by Yugoslavian historians: 60% of the Hungarian peasantry in Bánát would have been entitled to get landed property, in Bácska 41.41% of the 57.661 landless people were Hungarians. On the basis of the decree, also the group of Hungarians who had 1 to 10 "hold" landed property rightfully expected land. The number of these kind of properties was 28.279, and 35.26% of these (9.978 farms) were owned by Hungarians.⁸

If we want to sum up the effect of the agrarian reform on the Hungarian property situation, the following important figures should be noted: as we have already mentioned, Hungarian, and in general non-Slav claimers (Germans, Albanians etc.) did not get any land. Out of the 14 million hectares of land suitable for cultivation 2.5 million underwent change of proprietor, which is 17.8% of all cultivated land. The largest area of land was distributed in Bosnia: 1.286.227 hectares, in spite of the fact that because of the political pact, the Muslims – in return for their promise to vote for the Vidovdan constitution – could keep their properties. In Macedonia and Kosovo 593.111 hectares, and on the territories that had belonged to the Monarchy 555.137 hectares were distributed. On these latter territories 61 Hungarian opters lost 71.2 % of their land (90.062 hectares), while Hungarian landowners with Yugoslavian citizenship lost 38.6 % of their properties (20.622 hectares) So, altogether 110.684 hectare land originally owned by Hungarians was distributed, which means that 4.4 % of the land that was distributed in the agrarian reform had been originally owned by Hungarians. The land reform affected among others the following estates – names well known from Hungarian history: – the Slavonian estates of the Batthyányi, Majláth and the Khuen- Héderváry families;

⁸ Nikola L. GAČEŠA: *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Bačkoj*. 40–42.

- the Slavonian estates of the Batthyányi, Majláth and the Khuen- Héderváry families; the Csekonics family also had extensive landed property in Bánát, Archduke Frederick in Baranya, the Széchenyis had estates in Bácska. 364 estates owned by the state, local authorities, churches, foundations, and banks were distributed, altogether 247565 hectares, 36% of these estate types. Hungarians altogether lost 61,5 % of their land, the Germans 57%, the South Slav proprietors 40%.⁹ In Bácska a 6.715 *dobrovoljac* families (other sources give the figure 6.912) were settled, on an area of 53,465 "holds", in Baranya 235 Slav families got altogether 5.927 "hold" land, in Bánát the number of the families settled was 8.384, who got altogether 27.312 "hold" land.¹⁰ For comparison, it is worth mentioning that resettling on a similar scale took place only in the so called South Serbia.¹¹ In Kosovo - where mainly Albanians lived - 12.000 Slav families were settled, among them Serbians who opted for Yugoslavian citizenship from Hungary.¹² Not only the minorities were excluded from the land reform: in the course of the settlements there was discrimination made also among the South Slavs as well. As it was put also in the *dobrovoljac* decree of December 11, 1919, there were political objectives behind this. According to the decree, settlers were forbidden to take part in demonstrations against the state, otherwise they could lose their land, or their claim to the land. The settlements both in Kosovo, and in the north took place along the border, which also shows that the state was trying by all means to create a reliable Slav stratum in these areas. These strata were used by the power, especially in the 1920's, to have the minorities watched and intimidated. In Voivodina, the members of the extreme nationalistic organisation, the Serbian National Youth (Srpska nacionalna omladina SRNAO)¹³ were mostly recruited from among them. It was by using this against them later, during the reannexation, that their lands were taken away from the South Slav settlers, as unreliable groups for the Hungarian state. Initially, they were thrown over the border to the part of Serbia that was occupied by Germany, then, as this possibility was no longer available for the Hungarian state, they were collected in concentration camps. Bukovina Székelys (3.279 families 13.200 people) and Moldavian Csángós (53 families, 161 persons) and people with the title "vitéz" (481 families, 2.325 persons) were settled in their place. The families of 46 soldiers who died in the battles in Voi-

⁹ Out of the 369 estates affected by the agrarian reform 142 were owned by Austrians, 126 by Hungarians, 50 by Italians, 8 by Czechoslovakian citizens, 4 by Rumanians, 3 by Germans, and 17 were owned by other nationalities. Altogether 310 estates out of the 369 were owned by people of foreign citizenship. Mijo MIRKOVIĆ: *Ekonomska struktura Jugoslavije 1918-1941*. Zagreb 1952. 81.

¹⁰ A. SAJTI Enikő: *Délvidék 1941-44*. Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1987. 44-45.

¹¹ South Serbia meant for earlier sources the South parts of Serbia in the narrower sense: Kosovo and Macedonia.

¹² Branko HORVAT: *Kosovsko pitanje*. Globus, Zagreb, 1988. 40.

¹³ Branislav GLIGORIJEVIĆ: "Srpska nacionalna omladina (Srnao)". *Istorijski glasnik*. 1964. br. 2-3. 3-38. The Macedonians and the Croats had extreme nationalist organisations as well as the Serbs. (VMRO, Hanao) In January 1929 all of these were banned.

vodina also got lands in Bácska. The new Hungarian settlers were given altogether 35,000 "hold" land.¹⁴

The structure of the Hungarian landed estate in Voivodina, according to a 1938 Yugoslavian survey (thus after the closure of the land reform) was the following: (The data are about the area of Bácska, Bánát, Baranya and Szerémség.) 14,13 % of all the cultivated land was owned by Hungarians, in the Bánát 8,25%, in Bácska 22,89%, in Baranya 19%, in Szerémség 1,86%. The Slavs owned 52 % of the cultivated land in Voivodina, Germans and other minorities altogether 33,4 %.¹⁵ Unfortunately we have no data about the land owned by Hungarians, but on the basis of the above it is obvious that the land reform, which lasted for more than 10 years considerably weakened the strata of Hungarian large estate owners, while strata of others working in the agriculture did not gain anything in the reform. Although due to lack of data we cannot reconstruct the social composition of the Yugoslavian Hungarians precisely, we can venture to say that it was probably not much different from the general stratification of the given area. According to the data of the 1910 Hungarian census, more than 70 % of the population on the area which was annexed to Yugoslavia worked in the agriculture and 15% in agriculture linked industry and small industry, 2,8% were civil servants or self employed.¹⁶ After the change of the national status, the civil servant stratum practically ceased to exist. Because of the exclusion of the Hungarians from the land reform, the 15.074 people that emigrated overseas or to other European countries between 1920 and 1930 were primarily from the village population. This was 10 % of the 150.000 emigrants who left Yugoslavia, which was considerably more than the proportion of Hungarians within the entire population. (3,9%)¹⁷ The Home Affairs Ministry held the opinion about the emigration that "anti-national elements" did not have to be stopped from emigrating, only organised recruiting was seen as undesirable.¹⁸

The compensation of landowners whose estates were affected by the land reform was a complicated process mostly lasting for years. The compensation of Hungarians belonged to the so called opters' suit, associated with the name of Bethlen István, while that of the Yugoslavian citizens was regulated by the 1925 law about the so called optional redemption. Optional redemption meant that the land was let until the redemption, and then the new owner was entitled to buy it from the previous owner on the basis of a freely made agreement. Payment could also be made with state bonds. There are no comprehensive and reliable data about the compensation, but we know that there

¹⁴ A. SAJTI Enikő: *i.m.* 53–73. The same author: "Székely telepítés és nemzetiségpolitika a Bácskában – 1941". *Nemzetiségi füzetek* 6. Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984. 47–48., 53.

¹⁵ Šandor MESAROS: *Madžari u Vojvodini 1929–1941*. Novi Sad, 1989. 363.

¹⁶ Teodor AVRAMOVIĆ: *Privreda Voivodine od 1918 do 1929/30 godine s obzirom na stanje pre prvog svetsog rata*. Novi Sad, 1965. 19–20.

¹⁷ Šandor MESAROS: *i.m.* 16.

¹⁸ Arhiv Vojvodine (from now on AV) Torontalsko-Temiška zupanija 1918–1927. F. 77. 871/1923. The 1921 emigration law gave the concession of the transportation of emigrants over to foreign shipping companies. Živko AVRAMOVSKI: *i.m.* Knj. 1. Annual report 1922. 113.

was a moratorium on debts because of the increasing indebtedness of the peasants during the recession in 1932. In 1936 these debts had to be remitted altogether, more precisely some types of them were taken over by the state.¹⁹

Because of the severe war losses of the Serbian and some Dalmatian areas, and the historically differently developed economic levels and structures, viewed purely economically, it was probably an acceptable decision that different tax systems were introduced for the developed and for the underdeveloped areas. But because of the national composition of the country, and the greediness of the new, mostly Serbian economic elite the discrimination in the taxation was the source of constant grievances and discontent, controversies in the Parliament and in party politics, and thus a serious risk to the stability of the state. The population of Voivodina paid four times as much tax per capita per year in the 1920's than the Serbian population (290 and 70 dinars respectively). The comparable tax in Croatia was 100 dinars, in Slovenia 193 dinars. The standardization of the taxation was introduced – just as a lot of other bills of Parliament that proved to be unsuccessful because of the party struggles – during the royal dictatorship, in the form of a royal decree.²⁰

Educational policy and the Hungarian schools: the situation of the churches

The schooling of the minorities was regulated in the beginning by the February 1919 decree of the National Directorate, which encouraged the general restarting of the education after the war, and ordained that children “must be taught exclusively in their mother tongue.”²¹ Several school systems existed on the territory of the state, and the regulation of school attendance was diverse, not to mention the curricula, the structure, the density or the stages of the different school systems. In Serbia, Crna Gora and Bosnia for example the compulsory education lasted for 4 years, in Croatia 5, in Dalmatia and Voivodina 6, while in Slovenia 8 years.²² The basis for the standardization was the Serbian elementary school law of April 19, 1904, which knew of two types of schools: state and private. On the territories that previously had belonged to the Monarchy on the other hand, there were four types of elementary and secondary schools: state, local, denominational and private. Legally, initially the educational policy of the Serbian-

¹⁹ Nikola L. GAČEŠA: *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Banatu*. 73–96. ; 378, MOL K–28 ME Kisebbségi o. 1941–R–18381.

²⁰ Stevan MEZEI: *Privredne ustanove i organizacije u Vojvodini između dva rata 1918–1941*. Novi Sad, 1954. 64–65.; While between 1925 and 1928, because of the serious political struggles in the skupština, the successive governments had managed to pass only 97 laws, in 1929 in the form of royal decrees there were 200 laws introduced. Živko AVRAMOVSKI: *i.m.* Annual report 1929. 590.

²¹ AV F.I.1 Narodna uprava za BBB. Odsek za BBB Ministarstva prosveta 1919–1921. 305/1919.

²² *Samouprava*, January 25. 1922. Even in the 1920's the rate of illiteracy was high in Yugoslavia. 51.5% of the population was illiterate. In South Serbia 83.88%, in Bosnia-Herzegovina 80.55%, in Crna Gora 65.91%, in North Serbia 65.44% in Croatian Slavonia 32.10%, in Voivodina 23.3%, in Slovenia, 8.85%. Ž. AVRAMOVSKI: *i.m.* Knj. 1. Annual report 1925. 330.

Croatian-Slovenian state relied on the following three sources: the minority treaties signed in Saint Germain, the Vidovdan constitution, and the Serbian elementary school (already mentioned) and secondary school (4. July 1912) laws. In accordance with the international treaty, the monarchy obliged itself to make it possible for those of its citizens who belonged to a racial, religious or language minority, similarly to the Slav citizens of the state, to finance and maintain from their own resources charity, religious and social institutions, schools and boarding schools. The treaty stipulated that a fair share (proportional to their number) of the local budget intended to be spent on local expenditure on education, religion or charity should be given to the minorities. The obligation of instruction in the mother tongue was ordained only on the elementary school level. The above mentioned item of the minority treaty applied only to the territories annexed to Yugoslavia after January 1. 1913, so not to Kosovo or Macedonia.²³ The Vidovdan constitution ensured the freedom of science and arts, and free state education. Pupils were to be educated in the spirit of national consciousness and national unity. Citizens "belonging to other races and speaking other languages" – this constitution did not use the term "minorities" – were to participate in elementary education in their mother tongues, with the favours granted by the law"²⁴ – reads the corresponding article in the constitution. The 1931 Oktrojalt Constitution did still contain this paragraph. The 1904 Serbian elementary school law consisted of 89 items, and, beside the already mentioned parts about school types, had for the Hungarians serious consequences, foremost the chapter which ordained education in the national consciousness. It was referring to this part that the teaching of even the minimum of Hungarian culture and history was abolished. The obligation of maintaining schools – with the exception of the costs of the salaries of the teachers – was delegated the local communities. The 1919 amendment to this law spoke about minority education. In areas where minorities lived, *parallel running* mother tongue classes had to be started with Serbian language being a compulsory subject. Geography and history were also taught in Serbian. Thus, the Serbian elementary school law – contrary to the international regulations about this – did not recognise the right of denominations and local authorities to maintain schools. The school law was one of the most painful grievances of the Yugoslavian Hungarians, its redemption was one of the main ambitions of the Hungarian Party formed in 1922. That was the reason why the minority saving strategies of the Hungarian leading elite were spoken of as school centred. The 1912 Serbian secondary school law was extended to Voivodina on July 13. 1920. This law also ordained as state task the maintenance of secondary schools, and tuition was to be free of charge. The law differentiated between three types of schools: "gimnázium, "reálgimnázium" and "reáliskola". The standardization of the Yugoslavian school system was a long process. The first Yugoslavian

²³ GALÁNTAI József: *Trianon és a kisebbségvédelem*. Maecenas, 1989. 80. 97–98.

²⁴ MOL K-26 A miniszterelnökség központilag iktatott és irattározott iratai 1867–1944. 1921–XLI-6552. *The constitution of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy*. Article 16.

elementary and secondary school laws were passed only in 1929, after years of heated parliamentary debates about it, during the period of the royal dictatorship, when in effect the already existing practice was sanctified. Contrary to the 1927 Yugoslavian–Romanian minority school treaty, there was no such agreement reached between Hungary and Yugoslavia.

From the summer of 1919 – to use the expression used by the *Bácsmegyei Napló* published in Szabadka – “war reports” could have been written about the school situation in Voivodina. The purpose of the “frontal attack” was admittedly the breaking of the Hungarian intellectuality and supremacy. In October 1919 the schools were nationalised, including the denominational schools of the Greek Orthodox church as well.²⁵ The denominations and local authorities that had maintained these schools had to declare if they were willing to hand the schools over to the state along with all the assets. In case they were not, they lost the publicity right of the school, in other words they could not issue certificates, the staff did not receive salaries from the state, even the lumber-allotment was held back. This regulation was the source of tragedies on a mass scale especially as the situation was already difficult enough after the war. In 1919 and 1920, before the peace treaty was signed with Hungary, similarly to civil servants, teachers were also encouraged by the successive Hungarian governments to deny the oath of loyalty to the Yugoslavian state, which meant their instant dismissal. The oath of loyalty was required on the basis of the 1907 XXVII. Apponyi article. The different laws and regulations could be replaced by new ones only gradually in other areas of life as well. Until the signing of the peace treaty, elementary school teachers had received their salaries from Budapest, which meant more and more difficulties. In 1919/20 the teachers did not get their salaries and other allowances for months.²⁶ Because of the dispossession and nationalization of denominational and local lands and other properties, school maintainers were forced to “offer” their educational institutions to the state at an accelerated pace.

Without doubt, the most ill-famed measure of the educational policy in Yugoslavia is associated with the name of Svetozar Pribicević, Minister of Education. According to the so called name analysis decree of June 1920, children had to be schooled on the basis of the names of their parents and grandparents. They had to be enrolled in a Serbian school even if they did not speak Serbo–Croatian. On the basis of this decree, it was possible to forbid Jews and Germans to attend classes where the instruction was in Hungarian.²⁷ Enrolment took place in official rooms, and the allocation of the pupils based on their names was done by a politically reliable Slav teacher, appointed for the

²⁵ After the reannexation of 1941, the school network was taken over by the Hungarian state, but the restitution of formerly denominational or local or private schools did not happen.

²⁶ AV F. 81. 5926/1919.; 13504/1919.; 10501/1920.; 15397/1920. In case the maintainers of the school declared that they accepted the conditions of the state, they got their salaries from the Yugoslavian state.

²⁷ AV F. 81. 470/1920.

occasion by the local principal.²⁸ The introduction of the name analysis was justified by saying that this was a means to reverse earlier Hungarianisation, and to accomplish the cultural nationalisation of Voivodina. This decree was in effect until 1936–38, later with the mitigation that from 1932 the nationality and name of the father were the basis for the enrolling in schools.

In August 1920 the Hungarian secondary school system was also eliminated, as a compensation, the starting of Hungarian classes in the Serb–Croatian schools was allowed at some places. In 1920 the teachers in Hungarian schools and branches were given two years to pass an exam in the state language, otherwise they were to be dismissed. The Hungarian government was making considerable efforts in this situation also in Voivodina to at least slow down the process of the elimination with its financial support. In spite of these efforts, already at the beginning of the 1920's the Yugoslavian state managed to eliminate the Hungarian school system as it had functioned before the war. Although we do not have the exact data, we can presume that the summarizing data of the department of the Foreign Ministry that was preparing the treaty are usable. According to this, on the territories belonging to Yugoslavia, without Croatia, there were 896 elementary schools in 1918, 266 of them owned by the state and 631 of them denominational. The language of tuition was Serbian in 179 schools. Out of the 71 secondary schools 2 were commercial, 3 agricultural, and there was one Serbian and one German "gimnázium". In comparison, by the mid 1920's there remained only two Hungarian branches in secondary schools and one eight-form "gimnázium" in Szabadka and one four-form "gimnázium" in Zenta. According to some calculations 14,5 % of the Hungarian pupils attending secondary schools had the opportunity to be educated in their mother tongue.²⁹ According to Yugoslavian data, there were 1376 elementary schools in the Dunai Bánság in January 1930, which included 4233 branches. Out of these the language of education was the state language in 2931, German in 546, Hungarian in 528, Slovakian in 121 and Romanian in 89, and Ruthenian (Transcarpathian Ukrainian) in 18.³⁰ The number of Hungarian elementary school teachers also drastically decreased. Before the war their number was 1832, by 1941 there were only 250 left. In Baranya there was no Hungarian school left. In Croatia as well as in Bosnia, the well functioning school networks of both the Hungarian State Railways (Magyar Államvasutak, MÁV) and the Julian Association (Julián Egyesület) were eliminated. After the formation of the Croatian banate, there were 6 Hungarian elementary school branches permitted, while on the territory of the Ustashe Independent Croatian state between 1941 and 1945 there were no Hungarian schools at all.³¹ As it was already mentioned,

²⁸ AV F. 81. 11985/1920.

²⁹ MOL Filmtár (film archives) A Békeelőkészítő osztály iratai 12488. 16. title.; 12486. 211. title.

³⁰ AV F. 126. Krajevska banska uprava Dunavske banovine II. Upravno odeljenje. 30236/1930.

³¹ MOL Filmtár (film archives) 12496. 210. title The Julian Association and the MÁV maintained altogether 88 elementary schools, out of which 59 were Catholic, 17 Calvinist, MÁV school 12. For more details about this issue see: BERNICS Ferenc: *A Julián akció (Egy magyarságmentő egyesület tevékenysége Horvátországban és Bosznia-Hercegovinában és a jelen 1904–1992)*. Pannónia

in December 1929 a new elementary school law was passed, which, beside sanctifying the already existing practices in connection with the minority branches in schools, raised the period of compulsory education to eight years. Instruction in the mother tongue was ensured also by this law only in the first four years, with the mitigation that the so called national subjects (history and geography) could be taught in the language of the given branch. In the upper forms of the elementary school the language of education was Serbo-Croatian.³² In the second half of the 1930's there were 33 Hungarian nursery schools.³³

Replacing retiring teachers caused serious problems, as in 1919 the Hungarian teacher training school in Szabadka was closed, and the training of Hungarian teachers in Belgrade started only in 1932. The reopening of the teacher training school in Szabadka could not be accomplished again, in spite of all the efforts of the Hungarians, as Szabadka, because of its national composition and strategic location played an important role in the education policy of the Serbian power. Furthermore a Hungarian teacher training centre counted as a "threat to the state and Serbian national interests".³⁴

The German teacher training school was opened as an independent institution at the end of the 1920's in Újverbász (Vrbas), its boarding school was maintained from the donations of the Germans, and the teaching staff was exclusively German. The Hungarian teacher training school – as it was mentioned earlier – opened as the branch of the Serbian teacher training school in Belgrade. The boarding school was not financed from the donations of Yugoslavian Hungarians – which most probably had to do with the difference in the social structures, economic situations and cultural traditions of Germans and Hungarians –, but from the budget of The Centre of the Association of Civil Organisations (Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége Központja)³⁵ The Catholic Church, clandestinely, also supported the mostly poor students with grants. Teachers graduating here were altogether between 250 and 300.³⁶ There had been no universities on the southern parts of the former Hungary, Hungarian professionals received their education in Hungary, which was supported by the government through the Saint Gellért Society (Szent Gellért Társaság). Since the degrees earned in Hungary were only rarely accepted by the Yugoslavian state, and only after the passing of new exams, for the majority only the local universities were a solution. Only about 500 Hungarians

Könyvek, Pécs 1994. 31.; 40.; 59.

³² Branislav GLIGORIJEVIĆ: "O nastavi na jezicima narodnosti u Vojvodini 1919-1929." *Matica sprska, Zbornik za istoriju*. sv. 45. 1972. 55.; Šandor MESAROS: *Madjari u Vojvodini 1929-1941*.

³³ KARDOS Béla dr: "Kisebbségi iskolaügy Jugoszláviában." *Kisebbségvédelem*, 1938. 1. 2-3.

³⁴ AV. F. 81. 20742/1920.

³⁵ Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége Központja (The Centre of the Association of Civil Organisations) (TESZK) was founded by the Bethlen government in May 1921 with the objective to provide financial and moral support for the Hungarians who lived in Transsylvania, in the Upper Northern regions (In Czechoslovakia) and in Voivodina. More about the issue and the activities of TESZK see: BÁRDI Nándor: "A keleti akció". *Regio. Kisebbségi Szemle*, 1995. 3. sz. 89-134.

³⁶ CSUKA János: *A délvidéki magyarság története 1918-1941*. Püski, Budapest 1995. 398.

earned a degree at universities and colleges of Belgrade, Zagreb and Szabadka between the two world wars, approximately half of them in Zagreb, the majority earned degrees as Catholic priests, lawyers or pharmacists.³⁷

Because of the decline of the Hungarian education situation it is understandable why the Hungarian Party and the Cultural Association paid a lot of attention to the organisation of anti-illiteracy courses. They tried to make up for the lack of the teaching of Hungarian geography and history by organising People's Universities.³⁸

In Yugoslavia the constitution declared Serbo-Croatian as the official language of the State. And although by the end of the 1930's the rigid insistence on the state language became looser, at public institutions and railway stations there were still the difficult-to-ignore signs: "Speak the state language!" The use of the Hungarian language was confined to the following three areas: the first four forms of the elementary schools, cultural and public education associations and the private sphere. So, for the survival of the language, Yugoslavian Hungarian language *press* had a very important role to fulfil. Hungarian newspapers and periodicals, especially during the first period of the occupation and later at the beginning of the royal dictatorship, were in constant threat of being banned, and many times the securing of the financial background for the publication meant a serious problem. The daily papers, especially in the period of the parliamentary democracy, but also later, provided an accurate reflection on the division among the Hungarians in terms of religion and politics. The paper with the biggest circulation (18–22,000 copies) and with the highest standards, the *Bácsmegyei Napló* (Napló), founded in 1899 and published in Szabadka, was the centre of the emigration of the revolution of October 1918, the so-called Octobrists. The *Bácsmegyei Napló*, responding to the political consolidation within Hungary and the changes that took place in the politics of the Yugoslavian government towards the support of the Octobrists had lost its critical attitude towards Hungary, and it also lessened its criticism towards the activities of the Hungarian Party by the end of the 1920's. Another influential newspaper was the *Hírlap*, also issued in Szabadka, whose first issue came out on 6. December 1921, with considerable help from the Hungarian government, in a way to balance out the leftist *Bácsmegyei Napló*. We do not know its exact circulation figures. After the foundation of the Hungarian Party it was considered a semi-official party paper. It was also Budapest that supported the *Délbácska* (Reggeli Újság), issued in Újvidék in around 3000 copies, which claimed to be a spirited Christian and national paper. *A Nép*, founded by Nagy Iván, and issued as a weekly, was close to Zagreb and the Croatian federalist movement from the end of the 1930's. The official paper of the old county, the *Torontál* (Híradó), founded in 1871, in compliance with traditions, tried to take up the minority issues in a balanced tone. Its proprietor was close to circles of one of the leaders of the Hungarian Party, Várady Imre, who became later senator. It was published in the 1920's in 3–4000 copies. According to the not really comprehensive report

³⁷ MOL Filmtár (film archives) 12486. 210. title.

³⁸ AV F. 126. II. 211140/1930.

of the office of the Yugoslavian cabinet, there were altogether 29 Hungarian language papers and periodicals, out of which 5 daily papers, 11 weeklies and 13 periodicals.³⁹ According to other calculations, there were 44 publications in Hungarian, with different profiles: literary, economic, union, political, sports, religious publications. Five of them were daily papers, 11 weeklies, the rest monthlies, periodicals and journals. The *Kalanyár*, which was founded in 1932, can be mentioned here as an example of the literary periodicals, as it is now of literary historical value, as well as the *Híd*, which was launched in 1934 and has been published to date.⁴⁰ The change of names of the daily papers (the new names are indicated in the brackets) had to be enacted in 1929, when even the daily papers had to avoid names referring to "tribal diversity", such as names referring back to historical or old administrative geographical units (Bácska, Torontál, etc)

The situation of the Yugoslavian circulation of publications from Hungary reflected the relations of the two countries. During the royal *coup d'états* or the assassination in Marseille, for example, the import of all papers from Hungary were banned, while the list of daily papers permitted was changing continuously. There were no official legal regulations for the import of books, formally it was never prohibited, but before delivery the books were censored. It was explicitly forbidden however to import school-books and – because of the Apostles' Creed –, prayer books.⁴¹ The St. Gellért Association tried to circumvent the prohibition on the import of school books by changing the covers of the smuggled-in books in a printing house owned by Hungarians in Voivodina. There were no independent Hungarian publishing houses, the publication of Hungarian books, mainly fiction, was a matter of self sacrifice or business negotiations. The circulation of films with Hungarian subtitles was prohibited in 1929.⁴²

Beside the Hungarian Party, which was founded in September 1922 – the activities of which we are not going to discuss here –, the old and new cultural and church organizations, the different peasant-, sports- and reading circles as well as the charity organisations played an important role in the preservation of the self identity of the Voivodina Hungarians. At the end of the 1920's, according to Yugoslavian reports there were 83 Hungarian organizations of different types.⁴³ Among others the traditional Hungarian Reading Circle (Magyar Olvasókör, Népkör), the then almost 60 year old Hungarian Public Education Community of Bánát (Bánati Magyar Közművelődési Közösség) and the Hungarian Public Education Community of Zagreb (Zágrábi Magyar Köz-

³⁹ Šandor MESAROS: *i.m.* 367–371.

⁴⁰ CSUKA Zoltán: *A visszatért Délvidék*. Budapest, 1941. 227–238.; BORI Imre: *Irodalmunk évszázadai*. Forum Könyvkiadó, 1975. 132–134.; 149–151.

⁴¹ MOL K–28 Kisebbségi o. 1937–R–16317. Before the assassination in Marseille there were four daily papers imported from Hungary: *Magyar Hirlap*, *Esti Kurir*, *Az Est*, and *Népszava*, and people could subscribe to *Színházi Élet*, *Nyugat*, *Új idők* or the *Rádió Újság* as well.

⁴² AV F. 126. II. 17913/1930.

⁴³ Šandor MESAROS: *i.m.* 365–367.

művelődési Közösség), formed in February 1940, to mention just a few. These organisations were making – many times almost heroic – efforts not only for the preservation of the Hungarian culture and language, but after the banning of the activities of the Hungarian Party on 6 January, 1929 they also tried to undertake the political representation of the minority Hungarians. Since after the introduction of the royal dictatorship it was entirely hopeless to renew the activities of the Hungarian Party, it was especially important that there should be a *unified* cultural organization. This was achieved officially on 30. October 1941, after the Yugoslavian–Hungarian friendship treaty was signed on 12. December 1940. Semi-officially the Yugoslavian Hungarian Education Association (Jugoszláviai Magyar Közművelődési Szövetség) had been operating since November 1940, with Újvidék as its centre. The aim of the Association was the “mental, aesthetic, moral, social, physical and cultural” strengthening of Hungarians, but its statutes also included the strengthening of economical positions as well. The importance of the fostering of Hungarian traditions and the mother tongue as well as the improvement of the school system were specially emphasised. The selection of the leaders of the Yugoslavian Hungarian Education Association reflected the openly admitted aim that the associations wished to unify all the trends of the Hungarians. Its president was Krámer Gyula, who had never taken any public roles previously, the Christian trends were represented by the two vice-presidents, Ágoston Sándor, Lutheran bishop and Korányi Elemér, Catholic parson and papal prelate. The political wing of the banned Hungarian Party was represented by Sántha György, who was honorary president. The inner circle of the leaders included also Count Biszinger Ernő, who had not taken any political roles before either.⁴⁴

The increasing tolerance of the political circles in Belgrade towards minorities was indicated by the way the situation of the Hungarian theatres was solved, after the controversy about it had lasted for decades. It is worth quoting, however, what the arguments of the Home Ministry were in connection with the permission given to the starting of the Hungarian theatre company. According to these, the government should permit the operation of the theatre, because the 200 amateur companies in Voivodina meant a considerable threat to the state, since within them “Hungarian democratism is developing” and the “semi-illiterate Hungarian youth learn the Hungarian literary language in these companies”. The opening of a professional Hungarian theatre company – thus the argument – would make it possible to ban these amateur companies, and thus “we could get rid of the 200 active Hungarian national and cultural workers and exterminate these 200 light beams, which illuminate the Hungarian sky, and the active youth would be replaced by an audience which only listens, thus a passive crowd.”⁴⁵ After several unsuccessful attempts, the first Hungarian professional theatre company started

⁴⁴ Šandor MESAROS: *i.m.* 219–226.; Aleksandar KASAS: *Madjari u Vojvodini 1941–1946*. Novi Sad, 1996. 21–23.

⁴⁵ A V. F. 126. Kabinet bana, poverljivi broj 221/1938.

to play in January 1940, in the Russian Home in Belgrade, on the basis of the concession of a Russian emigrant called Mihajlo Mangler.⁴⁶

The Trianon Treaty had created new borderlines dividing not only political districts but also dioceses. In case of the Roman Catholic Church, this affected the Csanád, Pécs, and Szombathely dioceses. Most of the Alsóbaranya-Bács-Slavonia Calvinist diocese, which had belonged to the Dunamellék district, became part of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy, but also the Alsosomogy diocese belonging to the Dunántúl district, and the Békésbánát diocese belonging to the Tiszántúl district had lost some of their territories. The 1921 Yugoslavian constitution ensured the right to religion on the one hand, but stipulated that nobody could get exemption from citizenship or military obligations on the basis of their belonging to a certain denomination. The constitution also specially stipulated that the established and legally recognised denominations "are allowed to maintain connections with the heads of their church, in case the church constitutions of the individual denominations require this. The way and the means by which these connections can be maintained will be regulated by a separate law." Beside this, the constitution – in accordance with the spirit of the Saint Germain minority protection law – contained the guarantees of the financial support for the churches, put in the following way: "In case in the state budget there is expenditure aimed at denominational purposes, these are to be distributed among the established and legally recognised denominations according to the number and proportion of the followers, reflecting the extent these expenses seem to be genuinely necessary."⁴⁷

The Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy meant a common framework for districts, people and economic units that had not shared a common state in the course of history before, not only in the national, economic, cultural and historical sense, but also in way of religion. According to the 1921 statistical survey, 46.67% of the 11,984,911 people of the country were Orthodox, 39.29% Roman Catholic, 11.22% Muslim and 1.91% Protestant (Lutheran and Calvinist). There were in small numbers Greek Orthodox Catholics (0.34%) and also Jewish people (0.54%).⁴⁸

The Hungarian population belonged to three churches: the Catholic, the Lutheran and the Calvinist. There are no exact data about the proportional distribution of these three. The majority of the Catholics were the Croats, but also the Slovenians and in part the Germans, the Catholic Serbians, the Italians were Catholics, and there was a small Catholic Albanian community as well. The majority of the Protestants was from among non-Slavs, the Hungarians the Germans and the Slovaks belonged to this denomination. According to data from Hungary, the number of Protestants was altogether 216,847 (in the 1921 Yugoslavian statistics the figure was 229,517), out of which

⁴⁶ MOL K-28 ME Kisebbségi o. 1940-F-15564.

⁴⁷ MOL K-26 1921-XLI-6552. The constitution of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy. Article 12.

⁴⁸ Ivo BANAC: *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji. Porijeklo, povijest, politika*. Globus, Zagreb, 1988. 57-64.

167,011 Lutherans (Slovaks, Hungarians and Germans), 49,826 Calvinist, (the majority of them Hungarians, and approximately a quarter of them Germans).⁴⁹ Because of the religious division of the Hungarians, and the dominance of the Croats and Slovenians within the Catholic church, the churches could not fill the central role in the preservation of the Hungarian language, culture and consciousness the way they did in Transsylvania for example. An exception to this was the Calvinist church, which had the lowest number of believers among Hungarians.

At the beginning of the 1920's the main problems of the churches and the Hungarian minority were roughly the same: they were in connection with the school policy dictated by Belgrade, and the land reform. As we have already mentioned, the church schools and foundation schools had been nationalised, and church estates were also included in the land reform. The loss of the church properties made it almost impossible for the churches to fulfil their cultural, social and schooling missions. The teaching of divinity within the school programs was prohibited, as well as the travelling of the elected Protestant ministers. Against the spirit of the constitution, it was made extremely difficult for the churches to maintain relations with Hungary. A lot of priests and ministers were deported. As we can read it in the memorandum of the Universal Convent of the Calvinist Church in Hungary, which was forwarded to the Yugoslavian government in 1922, the Calvinist old people's home in Vukovar was looted and its old age residents were dispersed by the occupying Serbian troops.⁵⁰

The state did observe its international and constitutional obligations about the state subsidy of the churches, but the proportion of the financial support was the object of constant heated debates. The 1922/23 budget of the Ministry of Religion for example was distributed as follows: the Orthodox church got 67.1%, the Catholic Church 11.7%, while the Protestant Churches 0.2%.⁵¹

The relationship between Belgrade and the Catholic church was throughout this period determined by the Serbian-Croatian controversies and the Yugoslavian Italian relations, even if we know that Stjepan Radic, the leader of the strongest opposition party had explicit anti-clerical views, and unlike in Slovenia, in Croatia political Catholicism was not strong. It is not our task to discuss the Concordat in detail, but it has some bearing on the issues discussed here. Cabinet circles in the mid 1920's, in the course of the negotiations of the Concordat with the Vatican, made attempts to have Old Slav acknowledged as the language of the mass in Catholic churches. In Croatian Slavonia Rome already from the 1860's allowed the occasional use of Old Slav in the mass, but this time the efforts were about making it compulsory.⁵² There were also serious debates about the right to appoint bishops. Belgrade, on the basis of the traditions of the Eastern Church, in order to extend its centralising efforts to the Catholic church, de-

⁴⁹ MOL K-28 1926-R-89.

⁵⁰ MOL K-26 1926-XLI-2964.

⁵¹ MOL K-437 1924-8-382.

⁵² MOL K-63 1929-16/3-szn.; 3684.; 3708.; K-28 1927-R-35.

manded edictorial rights, while the Vatican intended to give only nostrification rights to the state. The Hungarian government unambiguously communicated through diplomatic channels to the Vatican that it was decidedly against the introduction of Old Slav as the language of the liturgies, since it was obvious that this could be the means of slavification among the Hungarian Catholics through the church. On the other hand, Budapest, agreeing with the Hungarian bishops, believed that the integrity of the old church districts in Voivodina should be maintained. The Yugoslavian government was not combatant about this issue during the negotiations with the Vatican, since, especially the radical governments of the 1920's thought that this issue had to be regulated in the Concordat, and in the meantime they accepted this as a temporary solution.⁵³ In this situation, the Hungarian government did not support the idea either that the Greek Orthodox church in Hungary should be separated from the Serbian church, and they accepted the 1921 decision of the Synod of the Orthodox Serbian Church about the governing of the church districts, which affected also the Greek Orthodox areas in Hungary.⁵⁴ In 1922, the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy and the Vatican reached a theoretical agreement in the question of the provisional governing of the Voivodina church districts, and the prospective formation of two new bishoprics: Szabadka and Nagybecskerek.⁵⁵ On the basis of this, the Vatican appointed Rafael Rodic as apostolic administrator of the Bánát, stationed in Nagybecskerek, and Ljudevit Budanovic as apostolic administrator of Bácska, stationed in Szabadka. The apostolic governors were subordinated directly to the Vatican, they could practice in the function of bishops, but they could not ordain priests until their promotions as bishops. The church districts of Baranya were annexed to the Djakovo bishopric, while the Muraköz and Murántúl to the Maribor bishopric.⁵⁶ According to the report of the Hungarian ambassador to Belgrade, both of the new church heads pursued a "cold bloodedly premeditated" policy, the aim of which was "to replace Hungarians and Germans, who were the majority of the Voivodina Catholics, by foreign emigrants to Voivodina, who did not know the language and culture and needs of the people living there, or the Catholic Serbians, whose numbers were small, but who - out of political considerations - were loyal to the purely Eastern Church oriented Belgrade governments".⁵⁷ While the Hungarians in Voivodina were politically, culturally and economically exposed to the pressure coming from the direction of Belgrade, in respect of the Catholic church, they had to defend themselves against a Croatian majority and their offensive efforts.

Unlike the Czechoslovakian government, the Yugoslavian governments did not disconnect the bonds of the Lutheran denomination to Hungary by means of decrees. Out of the Bácska Lutheran district 33, out of the Bácság 15, out of the Croatian Slavonian

⁵³ MOL K-28 1927-R-35.

⁵⁴ MOL K-26 1922-XLI-8850.; 7979., 8945.

⁵⁵ Živko AVRAMOVSKI: *i.m.* Knj. I. Annual report 1922. 116.

⁵⁶ MOL K-63 1929-16/3-1590.

⁵⁷ MOL. K-63 1928-16/3-3968

deanery 15 congregations had found themselves within the borders of Yugoslavia, altogether 11 deaneries.⁵⁸ After five-year-long waiting in 1926, the Lutheran church got the permission to summon its Yugoslavian constitutional synod. In this the influence of the Protestant circles of England and the United States had an important role.⁵⁹ The Slovakian representatives did not take part at this constitutional synod, since they wanted to achieve the formation of a separate Slovakian Lutheran Church organisation. In this new situation, the Hungarian members of the Lutheran church were trying to form a joint church organisation with the Hungarian Calvinists. This, however was rejected by the Calvinist church, which at their constitutional synod in Zombor decided on an independent Yugoslavian Calvinist church district, with a dean as its head.⁶⁰

The training of Catholic priests got completely out of the jurisdiction of Hungary, they were trained at the theology academies of the Monarchy (Zagreb, Versec etc.) Because of this, already in the 1930's the training of Hungarian speaking priests meant a problem, in spite of the fact that between the two world wars 75 Hungarian Catholics priests graduated at the university of Zagreb.⁶¹ The situation in this respect was better for the Calvinist church, although they also had a severe shortage of ministers, but the Calvinist ministers were trained at the Hungarian Calvinist Theology Academies of Kolozsvár, Pozsony and Losonc. But also this state of affairs had its drawbacks as Rávasz László, Calvinist bishop of Dunamellék put it in one of his letters: they are "half blind, half deaf and almost completely mute" in the South Slav environment, they cannot communicate with the authorities, and they do not know "the mentality of the Serbs and their views on church policy."⁶²

By the end of the 1930's it seemed as if the long negotiations with the Vatican were slowly reaching their goals. On 25 July, 1935, the Jevtic government and the Vatican signed the Concordat. The new, Stojadinovic government introduced it to the Parliament in November 1936, but it was taken off the agenda because of the protest of the Eastern Church. On the July 23 session of the Parliament it was finally to be passed with 167 votes against 129.⁶³ However, the government did not take it into consideration that – as put in the annual report of the British Embassy to Belgrade – the debates over the Concordat "have brought to the surface all the latent discontents which were provoked by the maintaining of the totalitarian measures of the dictatorship"⁶⁴ There were fierce anti-Concordat demonstrations in Belgrade, in the course of which the bishop of Sabac got in an unfortunate manner injured, which only added fuel to the fire. The leading circles of the Greek Orthodox church had objections primarily to the fact that

⁵⁸ MOL K-26 1921-XLI-11013.

⁵⁹ MOL K-28 1926-R-89.

⁶⁰ MOL K-28 1933-R-1100.

⁶¹ MOL Filmtár (Film Archives) 12486. 210. title.

⁶² MOL K-28 1927-R-86.

⁶³ *Politika*, 1937. July 24.

⁶⁴ Živko AVRAMOVSKI: *i.m.* Kujiga druga (1931–1938) Annual report 1936. 518.

the Concordat – in their opinion – made the position of the Catholic church more favourable in its relationship to the state than that of the Orthodox church was. In the eyes of the Serbian public the acceptance of the Concordat was equal to treason. Finally, the negotiations with the Orthodox church had convinced the prime minister that it was hopeless to introduce the Concordat for ratification to the Senate, and abandoned this goal completely. Thus, the Yugoslavian State, which described itself as the inheritor of the Serbian State, because of the resistance of the Serb National Church could not implement the 1935 Concordat, contrary to the 1914 Concordat, which was reached by Serbia.⁶⁵

As we have already pointed out, the Hungarians in Yugoslavia could not – despite all the efforts – regain their lost economic positions, and they could not reach a for them favourable revision of the land reform. However, recent research has pointed out that – contrary to what the research between the two world wars maintained with a basically defensive standpoint –, large estates in Voivodina, among them the ones owned by Hungarians (mainly because of economic considerations) – were distributed on a smaller scale. Those who opted for Hungarian citizenship had lost their property in greater proportions, while those who accepted Yugoslavian citizenship could keep significantly more land. The more serious problem was the total exclusion of the Hungarian peasants from the land reform, and the nationalization of the land belonging to local communities and churches, which had important cultural and educational roles to fulfil. Culturally, the drastic reduction of the Hungarian school network, the "name analysis" and the initial banning of cultural organizations were the most serious blows to the Hungarians in Voivodina, whose number was higher than half a million. While at the beginning of the 1920's the aim was to establish a nationally based political party and to take part in the parliamentary scene, during the royal dictatorship, since there was no other way but to accept the ban on the nationally based political organisations (among them the Hungarian Party), the emphasis was focused on cultural organizations. Paradoxically, the disintegration of the European order after the first world war, the increase of the influence of Hungary in Central Europe as a consequence of the territorial revisions and the loosening of the inside centrist unity, along with the intensifying of sense of danger of Yugoslavia in the way of foreign policy had together resulted in the widening opportunities for the preservation of the national existence of the Hungarians in Voivodina. This short several month long period was terminated by the military occupation and partitioning of Yugoslavia and the reannexation of Voivodina to Hungary.

⁶⁵ Miloš MIŠOVIĆ: *Srpska crkva i konkordatska kriza*. Beograd, 1983. 146.