

On the Modernization of the Kingdom of Hungary's Society and Freemasonry in 19th and 20th Centuries

by Martin Javor, Ph.D.

A wise man once said that to ignore history is to be doomed to repeat it. From time to time, I come across historical scholars who have detailed knowledge of brief but unique periods of history, sometimes in obscure places. Such is the case with Dr. Martin Javor. This article is a study of the attempted involvement of Freemasonry in the politics of Hungary in the period between the establishment of the Monarchy and the first world war. In today's complex world, we must frequently decide if a topic or concern is political or whether it is in the Masonic realm of morality. As you will see from the article below, we are not unique in history when we struggle with these issues. Let me know whether or not you find this type of article worthwhile.

At the beginning, I would like to thank the Great Lodge of Slovakia for supporting my research. Also, I would like to thank the University of Presov in Presov. Freemasons have a well-established tradition in Central Europe. I have talked about it at several conferences. This article is about the effects of Freemasonry on the modernization of society in the Kingdom of Hungary in the second part of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. That time was directly following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise [which set up the dual Austrian-Hungarian monarchy]. The movement was officially authorized only in the Kingdom of Hungary where, immediately after its legalization, the question of its modernization emerged.

Even though in the aftermath of the 1868 Compromise, many Freemasons actively participated in political life; ceremonial questions, internal problems of Lodges, and their organization within the Kingdom of Hungary were part and parcel of the activities of the Lodges. Arts and philanthropy were ostensibly the only objects of their support. For example, Jan Fadrus, the sculptor of the Maria Theresa statue, completed his studies with help from "Brothers" Lodges in Bratislava and erected the J. N. Hummel memorial.

Lodges and their members were providing for free-of-charge medical examinations and supporting nursery schools, casual wards, education of apprentices, financially disadvantaged students, libraries, and culture centers. This philanthropic activity also led to a keen interest in wider social issues. International relations and views of Freemasons signalled not only existing but also prospective problems with which the Lodges in more developed countries had to grapple.

With respect to Freemasons, politics and public life came to the forefront in the Kingdom of Hungary in the last decade of the 19th century when the secularization

laws completing the emancipation of churches were being enforced. These laws aimed to transfer a number of operations such as the management of the registrar's offices and marriages, previously performed by the church, under state control. The struggle for these laws, referred to as "anticlerical" by conservatives, was the incentive for the birth of the Catholic People's Party.

Freemasons were labelled as the initiators of these laws. That is, a mysterious and secret power in the background, the ideal object of a conspiratorial interpretation of history with which the Catholic Church was in a bitter conflict. Freemasonry was condemned vociferously by several Popes. Under the auspices of the Catholic Church, the Anti-Freemasonic Congress was convened in Trident in 1896, and a year later a similar meeting for the subject of monarchy was held in Vienna. The practicing Catholic could no longer be a Freemason, although under Joseph II there were one hundred eighty-five priests in Freemasonic Lodges, including bishops. After the dispute over the secularization laws, which the protestant church in the Kingdom of Hungary opposed, the main Lodge archive in Budapest replaced the names of protestant priests with ellipsis dots in a triangle.¹

"Brothers" had become the target of frenzied attacks as "a secret government" at a time when a completely different disturbance was beginning within the Lodges. With the establishment of the Laszlo Kiraly Lodge in Oradea in 1903, a discussion was opened that would lead to the modernization program. Its main objectives were as follows: a thorough enforcement of the 1868 Nationality Act; a correct and just solution of social and labour issues; a reform of jury court; a struggle against confrontations; church policy reform; general, equal, and secret ballot political elections; a reform in primary economic activity ownership; public administration; free state schools; and last but not least; the emancipation of women.

A dispute over whether or not to support such a radical and progressive program took place in the respective Lodges. It was stirred by the Martinovics Lodge founded by Oszkar Jaszi together with several colleagues from the Huszadik század (the twentieth century) magazine and the Sociological Society. New members were installed in an eight-item, radical, democratic program at the initial ceremonial. Item seven sought "a democratic, economic, cultural, and political solution to the question of nationality."²

The progressive program came up against stiff opposition from conservatives. In April of 1910, Jászi summed up the dispute that had lingered over several years in an article published in the Kelet, a Freemasonic magazine. According to Jászi, their vision of Freemasonry as the initiator of a democratic change in the country had already been supported by "several hundred Brothers" who not only "identified themselves with contemplation on amiable terms" but also "as audacious and courageous soldiers with regard to the question of mankind's progress."

"Opinions form in a particular country and materialize in conscious acts. The notion of progress differs from country to country; in the Kingdom of Hungary, progress is primarily associated with the creation of civil society. Progress in the

Kingdom of Hungary is linked with the expression of opposition to the land tenure of 'the dead arm,' that is church, fideikomism, and opposition to Christian schools. Progress is understood as an endeavour to enhance intensive farming and industry and as an answer to clerical and national issues. Progress is to compare Hungarian culture with the West; a spiritual, moral, and material prosperity of vast masses of people. The only way to achieve the aforementioned progress was universal, equal, and secret ballot political elections. Freemasons had to be at the focal point of the struggle for this, since they were "the most erudite and independent part of the middle-class in the Kingdom of Hungary. Furthermore, they are on the friendliest of terms with people."³

The dispute over the direction of Freemasonry and the extent of its engagement in politics continued with varied intensity up until 1918. Lodges, both "conservative" and "progressive," from Slovakia⁴ were also joining in.

In June of 1915, there were eighty-two Lodges in the entire Kingdom of Hungary, amounting to 7,370 members out of which four hundred seventy-seven resided in Slovakia. The number of members in Budapest Lodges from Slovakia was difficult to estimate. From the beginning of the century, the social structure of Lodges had changed considerably. The high gentry, which originally enjoyed a superior status, was now being put to the fringes by the middle classes, entrepreneurs, and those in free professions. The lists of members in the Lodges in Slovakia showed that ideas about Freemasons being a privileged club of entrepreneurs and affluent people were mistaken.

Most Lodges were predominantly "intelligent," and this tendency was growing. Twenty-nine office clerks and directors of companies joined the Lodge Brotherhood in Bratislava, founded in 1902, along with seventeen lawyers, nine doctors, seven engineers, four factory workers and businessmen, a pharmacist, and an actor. The Imrich Thokoly XXX Lodge in Prešov was established in 1902, mostly by educators from the law academy and the grammar school. Even among new members who joined the Lodge in 1918, there were twelve educators, nine office clerks and directors, five lawyers, four businessmen, three doctors, two pharmacists, an engineer, and an entrepreneur.

A similar structure with a high numbers of clerks, educators, and those in free professions was also to be found in other Lodges. Many Lodges struggled with a lack of financial resources since the management of a Lodge was costly, a separate room was a must, and equipment was needed. Many prospective members could not even afford dues, and therefore, additional events had to be organized. Educators, traditionally a low-paid class, were receiving various discounts. As a result, the headquarters was often forced to write off the debts of small Lodges. A subsidy was donated by large Lodges in order to provide the necessary equipment. In 1915, the Spiš Lodge warned that they had a different status than that of rich Lodges in Pest, "The majority of country Brothers are low-paid office clerks who take great pains to meet the demands laid down by Lodges, such as donations to charity and contributions to progressive objectives."⁶ Most Lodges, for example

those in Zilina, Nove Zamky, and Spisska Nova Ves had already been disbanded in the 19th century due to a lack of affluent members.

The attitude amid Slovak Lodges toward the disagreement concerning the political tendencies of the Kingdom of Hungary's Freemasonry was not unanimous with regard to whether to stick to the path of the old contemplative and philanthropic activities or to embrace a "profane life." The Brotherhood of Bratislava stated: "On the one hand, the members of our Lodge are governed by the conviction that Freemasonry is first of all an intimate matter; therefore, it ought to be concerned primarily with the education of its members. On the other hand, there are Brothers who undertake extensive activities, setting their minds to establish themselves in the service of progress in the society. As yet, it is still possible to maintain the cooperation of the two directions ..."⁷

The Lodge Resurrexit in Košice had already sent a "ceremonial and decisive protest" to all Lodges in the country in 1905 to make sure that the Lodges would stay away from party disagreements and everyday politics. That could have led to a separation. The Brothers of Prešov published a lecture of Janos Jonas entitled "Lodge or Party?" In the lecture, he argued that themes regarding the change in voting rights, the secularization of education, and the question of social issues were essential, but opinions about their realization varied greatly and that it was the latter which was the crux of the problem. An answer to the brochure was given in the first issue of a recently founded magazine of pro-reform Freemasons called *Dél* on January 30, 1908.⁸ They recognized the achievements of Jonas who had already been a Brother for thirty years but not the fact that he interpreted Freemasonry as a refuge for those who did not know their place in the world. Self-educating communities and courses were more appropriate for such people. Freemasons did not want to follow the program of one party only, but they could not remain aloof from other important issues of the day.⁹

Disagreements of the two tendencies deepened when in 1910, pro-reform Freemasons began to publish a magazine known as *Világ* (the World). In the first issue, as a main tool driving the Kingdom of Hungary out of its grave situation, the magazine mentioned that universal secret ballot and equal voting rights would "break the casino, the aristocracy, and the political power of feudalism." In the fourth issue of the *Világ*, the editorial argued that without secularization, the "civil Kingdom of Hungary" was not possible. At that time, a novel by Anatol France with an anticlerical theme was circulated and penned and published in installments in newspapers. The novel was entitled *The Island of Penguins*. In the tenth issue of the *Világ*, an open letter to István Tisz was published, describing a vision of civil society against the backdrop of "the debris of the Kingdom of Hungary's agrarian feudalism." The letter was signed by three hundred distinguished personalities, including three Slovak entrepreneurs.

As for the issue of extension of voting rights, the Lodges in Slovakia expounded a conservative and a tentative view. The Bratislava Silence Group, in its 1905 annual report, described its extensive humanitarian and enlightenment activities, but its

members were not, arguably, willing to hold discussions concerning the universal political right to a vote as long as it was understood as "an exclusive political matter."¹¹ Felvidek in Banska Bystrica had complained a year before, mentioning that several members were bringing this issue to the Lodge, and that by doing so, they were digging a grave for "the present flourishing of Freemasonic life." The universal political vote was in agreement with Freemasonic principles, but in the end, it was a matter of political parties, and therefore, each Brother could hold his own view. In its 1908 annual report, Feldivék stated: "In line with the majority of other Lodges, we are interested in issues related to free public education and the universal political right to vote." Consequently, internal discussions and lectures regarding the aforementioned issues were organized by officers from Budapest. The Lodge was in opposition to the universal political right to vote, quoting the low level of public education as the basis for the argument. At that time, this was a widespread chauvinistic argument, supporting the fact that even "Brothers" were not immune to the spirit of the times. In Feldivék, arguably, "many people live and work among nationalities, observing closely the considerable danger that is soaring above the people of Hungary." The Lodge and its activities were almost paralyzed in 1913 due to the fact that Brothers embroiled in disagreements made every effort to avoid all political issues.¹²

The Spiš Lodge also opposed universal political elections. The Lodge claimed that first of all, it was a necessity that people be educated. Such subjects led to an undesirable closeness to political parties. The people of Kezmarok, however, turned down the initiative of the Lodge Eotvos which, in 1908, suggested the amendment of the third article in the bylaws of the Grand Lodge to read that the most important task of Freemasonry in the Kingdom of Hungary was to spread the Hungarian nationalistic idea and to coauthor the creation of a state, making sure "that everything and everyone within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary be Hungarian." Such a viewpoint was closer to the paradigm of the party and nationalistic community. Freemasons sought to bring people together rather than force them apart. "It is a most awesome task of Freemasons to work on settling nationalistic conflicts." The attitude of this Lodge was surely influenced by its structure which included a great number of ethnic Germans. After a spate of lectures about the issue of nationality, the Lodge cast doubts on the argument, stipulating that the universal political elections would bring to Parliament many nationalistic members. According to the Lodge, it did not have to be a mistake, since it would be followed by a discussion by "competent men" rather than the subservient and "agitators."¹³ The ideas spurring contemplations about nationalistic issues in the Lodges were particularly drawn from the discussions held in the Democracy of Budapest. Later, Jaszi's brochure "The nationalistic question and the future of Hungarianism" and articles published in the Világ after 1910 were also a vital source of information. The program was summed up in the magazine Del as follows: "Good schools, good economy, good administration in the speech of people, the recognition of all rights for each nationality so that they could develop their speech and culture freely." In a lecture held in the Haladás (progress) Lodge in Debrecen, it was propounded that those anti-Hungarians who were

exerting every effort to bring about emancipation, in fact, carried out a Freemasonic activity and needed help with it. "Chauvinistic Freemasonry cannot be Freemasonry."¹⁴

The attitude toward the church was also an issue. The establishment of non-clerical schools had been one of the most important program objectives of the Kingdom of Hungary's Grand Lodge since 1906. Conservative Lodges such as that in Presov agreed with it but asked for a careful procedure, "within the realms of possibilities" so that Brothers would not be encumbered with the defense of the implementation of non-clerical schools wherever they would set foot. The Lodges in Bratislava embraced a similar argumentative paradigm.

Contrary to this, the Ressurexit Lodge, after a lecture and discussion, adopted a unanimous resolution that the secularization of church property was considered to be "a primary task of the nation" and that it would be supported. Brothers in Košice had long been in a bitter conflict with local clerks, which was accentuated by decades of mutual criticism. The Košice newspapers published in installments, excerpts from the ceremonial rules of the Lodge with the comment, "that is how adult men revel." The Brothers of Košice received a small satisfaction when they managed to buy land for building a Lodge next to the Dominican monastery for 20,000 K. The dignitaries of the Dominican order bought it from "the Brothers" for 40,000 K so as to be spared such neighbors. The Lodge bought a different parcel for 30,000 K, and in fact, it received a subsidy from the church to cover equipment expenses.¹⁵

Bitter anticlerical tones were also reverberating from other Lodges, but these voices were rare. The suburban environment cautioned about proposals that were too radical, and there was concern that society would identify anticlericalism with atheism. The Feldivek Lodge sent a circular letter in 1908, condemning both clericalism and "hyper modernism." The aim of the criticism was directed at "hyper modernism," in particular. "Some want to lead people to the simplicity of the Middle Ages, others want to destroy all that people deem sacred; then they will be left with nothing but alcohol, nicotine, opium, absinthe, cannabis, and everyday drudgery." The Lodge in Bratislava defended the arguments stated in the circular letter and vehemently demanded that the Grand Lodge waive the requirement laying down the secularization of church property.

In the period between 1900 and 1918, the Lodges were constantly fraught with other issues brought about by modernization such as the social question, family breakdown, and the emancipation of women. The minutes of Lodges submitted to the Grand Lodge in Budapest, discussion articles in internal magazines, and numerous brochures showed that the "contemplative" direction was gradually marginalized in favour of embracing the "profane world."

The majority of Slovakia country Lodges were moderate rather than conservative. Only one in Prešov was listed in the magazine, *Del*, in 1908. All controversies and disputes held in the course of these discussions were taken with a

pinch of salt; however, the Presov Lodge sharply criticized the establishment of the "profane" Freemasonic magazine, but as of 1912, all its members subscribed to the magazine, Világ. In 1917, the Dél "evaluated" all Lodges in the Kingdom of Hungary on the grounds of their willingness to participate in the reforms whereby eighteen of them were classified as progressive but none from Slovakia and twelve Lodges were classified as enemies to the reform, including those from Slovakia, i.e. both Lodges in Bratislava and one in Kosice.¹⁶

The disagreement concerning the fundamental principle, dating to the end of the previous century, about whether to be publicly engaged or not was gradually shifting toward discussions related to methods and tools of engagement. In smaller country Lodges and in more financially disadvantaged ones challenged by an inert, conservative environment, a tentative attitude took control. The establishment of a radical, middle-class party being the aim of Jaszi and his company, was deemed improper from the point of view of traditional Freemasonic methods. In actuality, however many Brothers claimed that it was fraught with problems in terms of its content. The Lodges were by no means homogeneous, and with the exception of radical conservatism and socialism, "Brothers" belonged to a wider set of political opinions.

The variety of opinions of Freemasons was such that several aspects of modernization were not supported by their activities. In fact, the opposite was true. They supported the ideas of progress, development, social change, and above all, the orientation of the society toward the rational. This might seem contradictory because of the organization's allegorical stories, particularly its complex structure of rituals. However, the rational was essential to the "Brothers." Its core was the emphasis on science and education. This was reflected both within and outside the Lodge.

At the meetings of Lodges, members and invited guests; often university professors, journalists, and economists; gave lectures about philosophy, science, and politics. In Ressurexite in Košice, lectures were given on national ideals, economic shifts of leading western countries, tasks related to the spread of the political voting rights, spiritual and moral education, tuberculosis, Darwinism, feminism, the protection of apprentices, the German historian Mommsen, socialism, secularization, compulsory and free state education, and the reform of secondary schools. Apparently, new knowledge and thoughts were supported in a variety of ways; through schools, the local press, the standard organizations, and where necessary, new ones were founded. The effect on schools was exerted systematically.

Out of sixteen educators in the Lodge Brotherhood in Bratislava, five were school principals. In the Lodge Gemer in Rimavska Sobota, there were approximately twelve educators, including five school principals, out of the total number of thirty members. Furthermore, the Freemasonic circle, Banský bystran in Banská Štiavnica, was pronouncedly focused on the local school of higher education. It had fourteen members out of which nine were educators. In Presov, there were twelve educators

out of which four were school principals and four were teachers at a local law academy. These educators, together with local doctors and lawyers, sat on committees and headed various enlightenment organizations as well as cultural institutions. In Kosice, local conservative and clerical circles had long been successful in perverting the enlightenment and lecturing activities of the Lodges. Similarly, as in Banska Stiavnica, the Lodge in Kosice initiated the establishment of the Organization of FreeThinkers for the students of the law academy under the name of the Batsányi circle. The circle even organized lectures for labourers. In 1911, it ran a series of eleven public lectures about "the naturalist ideology." The first lecture from the series was given on December 12th, 1911, on the topic of feminism, and was held in Kosice. The lecturer, V. Glucklich, talked about the mission of women in the twentieth century.¹⁷

Due to its contacts with several entrepreneurs, the Lodge Spiš in Kežmarok was able to make use of the influence it exerted on the town and its vicinity and as a consequence, managed to establish the Organization for Women and an offshoot of the Liberal lyceum which would organize enlightening and medical lectures in the wider area. In 1908, this amounted to thirty-five lectures in twenty places. In 1912, they wrote to the Grand Lodge with pride: "In Kežmarok, all charitable and enlightening institutions are under our enormous influence." The Liberal lyceum was founded in 1883, headed by Grand Master Gyorgy Joanovics. The Freemasonic background of the organization was well disguised by a system of country subsidiaries, allowing Jozef Tiso to give a lecture there on March 5, 1914. The Lodge North founded a very active affiliate in the "Society for the Spreading of Knowledge." This was a work of the Lodge Kazinczy. The Lodges in Bratislava founded and supported a subsidiary to the "Society of Urania," which also had a Freemasonic background. Mihályi Perjési from the Lodge Brotherhood became the subsidiary's first chairman. On the committee and amid the lecturers were members of both Lodges from Bratislava.¹⁸

The activity of the organizations founded, initiated, and clandestinely supported by Lodges was impressive both in scope and content. Urania in Bratislava organized a multitude of lectures for children, secondary school pupils, apprentices, and labourers. Theatrical plays and the most up-to-date technological gadgets such as photographic images produced on a transparent screen and glass were commonly included in the lectures. Later, Urania owned and used cinema projectors. The lectures focused on distinguished personalities, writers, the United States of America, the Alps, the High Tatras, the city of Pompeii, Nansen the explorer and scientist, and prehistoric man. The lectures were held directly in factories, at Apolka, and at Western foundry. Transparency films were obtained from a hired company in Dusseldorf.¹⁹

Lectures at that time were ranked among the most popular sources of information and genuine amusement, increasing their demand, particularly in the event that a distinguished scholar was featured. The distinguished scholar was by no means a problem for Freemasons, considering their contacts. The audience in smaller towns included four to five hundred people on more than one occasion. Many participants

in the lectures were acquainted with such problems as social reform, judiciary reform, and feminism, as well as issues pertaining to educational development, scientific discoveries, the experiences of explorers, and the issue of hygiene. Lodges in the towns with higher educational centers took pains to establish an intellectually modern foundation, a database of knowledge and viewpoints undergoing political changes and coup d'états. Their scope and their influence remained a matter of conjecture as the effect this exerted on local conditions, the press, and the negotiations with municipalities could be determined only by systematic regional research. The appeal could be assessed only indirectly, inferring from the sharp reactions of conservative circles. This was also the case with the "conservative" activities of the Lodges.

The Lodge Prešov organized various activities to support the town's development including evening business courses, activities supporting hygiene in towns, and the construction of water conduits. Many lectures were given; their most important tool was Martinovic's circle. He was inspired by the ideas of Galileo's Circle in Budapest founded in 1908 and was unequivocally supported by the Lodge Commenius. Galileo's Circle was an elite center of pro-western young intellectuals. Its focus was best conveyed by the names of its lecturers: M. Adler, W. Sombart, I. Bloch, and E. Bernstein. These presentations and discussions focused on social problems, Freud, Mach, the sexual question, historical materialism, capitalism, and the revision of Marxism. Martinovic's Circle in Presov was unable to follow in the same fashion, but its direction was similar. A leaflet from 1910, announcing the activity of Martinovic's Circle, propounded that its objective was the enforcement of the naturalistic ideology and the philosophy of social sciences. Moreover, it was necessary, particularly in the part of the Kingdom of Hungary that was still governed by the paradigm of the Middle Ages and where lords ridiculed country teachers conducting courses for the illiterate. The Circle furthermore delivered lectures about Marx, Darwin, Spencer, contemporary Russian literature, the development of morale, and the relationship between science and religions.

Martinovic's Circle endeavoured to educate activists by regularly held seminars and lectures, inviting as speakers famous writers, doctors, scientists, and lawyers. Its members had a reading room equipped with modern books, magazines such as the Nyugat (West), the Világ (the World), the Huszadik Század (the Twentieth Century), the Szocializmus, and the Rainissance. The Circle was subject to criticism from landed gentry, the town council, the head of the law academy, and the local press. The reason for the opposition to Martinovic's Circle was an unusual lecture given in 1911 by a student of the law academy about the revolution of 1848-49. As a consequence, the chair of the Circle was forced to resign under the threat of losing his employment, and the Circle was banned from the academy.²⁰

The active presence of the Kingdom of Hungary's Freemasonry in public life agreed with the active presence of Slovak politics. A direct response to the politics was reflected by the magazine Prudy. The magazine was particularly awed by radical middle class rationalism. The magazine's young intellectuals learned about the ideas of pro-reform Lodges from Galileo's Circle in Budapest and from the

magazine Világ. Many students from Slovakia took part in a variety of activities organized by Galileo's Circle. The Prudy mentioned it several times. Galileo's Circle organized a spate of discussions about the nationality issue in 1911. One of them was opened with a lecture by Milan Hodža. Participants in discussions included O. Jászi, Romanians, and Serbians as well as Hungarians. Hodža lucidly made explicit his principle by pointing out that a democratic, liberal, and progressive middle class Kingdom of Hungary could only exist if non-Hungarian nations would cooperate. The Prudy recommended the reading of the Világ to its readership since much could be learned from it. In the 1912-1913 volume, a travel book of Jászi's sojourns in Danish areas of Germany was published in five installments. The article stated that the results of a government of assimilation and violence were a strengthened national consciousness and the separation of the subjugated nations. The remedy could only be the democratization of the public life. The young generation around the Prudy was particularly attracted to the merging of democracy with the nationalism, suggesting that without such politics, the Kingdom of Hungary was neither a legal state (rechtsstaat) nor a cultural one.²¹

When we assess the mutual appreciation and inclination of the group around the Prudy and pro-reform Freemasons, it ought to be done with a detachment, considering the political context of the times. In both cases, the groups were minorities. As argued by Milan Podrimavsky in a study, Oscar Jaszi had arrived at the conclusion that the Slovak question of pro-reform Freemasons was marginal in relation to Hungarian radical democrats. The comparison of pre-war programs of Slovakian political groups with pro-reform Freemasons showed a number of points of agreement paralyzed by profound differences in other issues. The Lodges thought that the solution of nationalistic problems would strengthen citizens' individual rights to use their language in schools, courts, and offices. Slovakian parties and movements supported the restriction of the economic and political power of large landed estates, but the majority rejected it, supporting the position of the church. They reached agreement on issues pertaining to the improvement of education, but Slovakian politicians considered the implementation of exclusively non-clerical education to be ideologically improper and threatening to the nation. Anti-clerical schools, drawing from the experience of the times, were more susceptible to the politics of assimilation.

The general agreement of all Slovakian movements, ranging from conservatives to social democrats, concerned universal political elections. Interestingly, this represented one of the most acrimonious disputes within the Lodges. While universal political elections were seemingly a general requirement and viewpoint of "Brothers," in fact, the opposition toward them was still strong. The Lodge Brotherhood in Bratislava organized a joint meeting with a pro-reform Lodge from Petofi in 1911 in order to resolve contradicting opinions regarding political elections. The debaters from the Bratislavian Lodge applied a well-established and traditional argument, suggesting that granting a vote to wide classes of people would challenge the Hungarian supremacy in the country. After the discussion, according to a written report, the opinions were in favour of the reform. Several Transylvanian Lodges had reservations about universal political voting rights.

Discussions regarding the direction, working methods, and effectiveness of Lodges continued in the last pre-war years. Despite the variety of opinions, they agreed to expand "Brotherhoods" and Lodges. In a circular letter published by the Grand Lodge in October of 1910, the project of spreading Freemasonry to more important towns was introduced. In Slovakia, places such as Komarno, Šahy, B. Štiavnica, Kremnica, Spišská Nová Ves, and Levoča were considered. In a letter written by the Lodge Sever (North) based in Vrutky, it was explicitly mentioned that except for cultural and social issues, its task was "to settle nationality disputes." Its members came from Kysuce, Orava, Liptov, Turiec, and Horne Považie. It was the only Lodge which included Slovaks openly adhering to the Slovak nationality. Peter Makovický, from a recognized entrepreneurial family, transferred his membership from the Banska Bystrica Lodge to Sever. In addition, Kornel Stodola was accepted by the Lodge along with Peter Kern the painter in 1914.

The Grand Lodge in Budapest was alarmed about a small number of nationality adherents in the Lodges of the Grand Orient Lodge in Paris. The failure of recruitment in Slovakia could be explained by disputes between "Brothers" and church as well as an extended anti-Semitism. A more detailed research of member lists might also reveal other causes. A uniform relationship between Freemasonry and the church could not be established, since in similarly Catholic Croatia, the increase in membership of existing Lodges counted new Croatian members and several Lodges held their meetings in the Croatian language.

The Lodges in Bratislava had split on the grounds of national, Germanic-Hungarian base in 1902. The Hungarian members of the Lodge Mlcanlivost (Silence) were complacent neither with the German spoken there nor with the "Pressburghian" spirit. By founding a separate Lodge, they sought to achieve "that the idea of a unified Hungarian state be spread in the wider circles and affect town matters by exercising patriotic and Freemasonic influence."²³

The direction of Freemasons toward democratic changes before the war was obvious, although the tangible results were not impressive. It was related to education, enlightenment, culture, the rise in materialism, the reformation of public administration, and social relationships. There was a long way to go for all those directly involved in the preservation of the post-feudal Kingdom of Hungary's class relations, particularly if it directly concerned so many social classes.

The program's principles of "pro-reform" Freemasons from the beginning of the century were radical to such an extent that implementation failed, even within the confines of its own environment. The fear of "uneducated masses," which prevailed over Hungarian economic elites, was not overcome, even within the Lodges.

Notes

1 Lipták, Lubomír: Freemasons and the modernization of Slovakia. In: OS - Civil Society Forum, 2002/2, p.24

- 2 MOL Budapest (Magyar országos levéltár), Szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára, P 1083, 128 - LXX: Magyarországi symbolikus nagypáholy (Martinovics, Budapest)
- 3 KELET. A magyarországi symbolikus nagypáholy közlönye. Budapest 1910
- 4 According to the figures in MOL in Budapest
- 5 MOL Budapest, Szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára, P 1083, 128 - LXX: Magyarországi symbolikus nagypáholy (Thököly Imre - Eperjes 1902 - 1918)
- 6 Lipták, L.: Freemasons, p. 25.
- 7 Lipták, L.: Freemasons, p. 26.
- 8 Dél, 30. január 1908, p. 2.
- 9 Lipták, L.: Fremasons, p. 26.
- 10 The magazine Világ is in teh Szechényi national library
- 11 MOL Budapest, Szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára, P 1081, 6 - XIX: Magyarországi jánosrendü nagypáholy (Hallgatagság - Poszony)
- 12 MOL Budapest, Szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára, P 1081, 9 - XXXII: Magyarországi jánosrendü nagypáholy (Felvidék - Besztercebánya)
- 13 MOL Budapest, Szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára, P 1134, 19 - 9: Vegyes iratok gyujteménye 1862 - 1920 (Szepes - Késmárk 1902 - 1915)
- 14 Lipták, L.: Freemasons, p. 26.
- 15 Benczúr, Vilmos: A Kassai Szabadkőművesség 1870 - 1913, Košice 1914, s. 18.
- 16 Lipták, L.: Freemasons, p. 27.
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