

## THE MEMORY OF THE 1848 OCTOBER MARTYRS OF ARAD IN THE PRESS DURING THE ERA OF DUALISM

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### Abstract

The aim of this essay is to investigate the memory of the Martyrs of Arad executed after the defeat of the War of Independence in October, 1849 in some national papers at the time of the dualism.

The press treated them as a single entity, similarly to the collective memory and to this essay. They were represented as committed heroes of the nation, forming a sacralized group of 13 people.

The cult of the national commemorative day, the 6th of October is in close relation to the orientation of the given paper. Not surprisingly, the *Független Magyarország* (in English: Independent Hungary) supported the cult the most, because of the fact that Ferenc Kossuth, the son of the „Great Kossuth” had significant influence of the newspaper. This resulted in a unique, sometimes even sarcastic criticism towards the king. Therefore, the 6th of October and Franz Joseph were regularly contrasted. The other organs did not dare to present such a contrast, but they tried to harmonise the cult of the king and the memory of the 13 martyrs, which consequently resulted in a serious and contradictory, even schizophrenic attitude.

The *Alkotmány* (The Constitution) attempted to divide the readers’ attention and avoid prioritizing the day of sorrow because of its loyalty to the ruler and therefore it underrated the importance of the day. The *Vasárnapi Ujság* (Sunday News) did not deal with the topic as often as the other organs, due to its politically neutral tone and the dominance of literature in that weekly. It wanted to avoid conflicts. Thus, the paper avoided touching those topics, which would have been inconvenient for the ruler. As for local papers, the Catholic *Eger* and the liberal *Egri Ujság* had their consistent interpretations as well.

*Keywords:* history of memory, cult, cult of the King, Martyrs of Arad, 1848-49, Franz Joseph

### Outline of Article

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The papers

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The day and the *Független Magyarország*

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Summary

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### Introduction

The aim of this essay is to present the memory of the Martyrs of Arad executed after the defeat of the War of Independence in October, 1849 in some national papers at the time of dualism. However, the memory of the executed Lajos Batthyány, first Prime Minister of Hungary, is not in focus. Instead, the paper concentrates on the interpretation of the press in connection with the Martyrs of Arad. The press treated them as a single entity, similarly to the collective memory. They were represented as committed heroes of the nation, forming a sacralized group of 13 people.

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Although the history of memory is becoming more and more important, it has not received its right place in historiography yet. Therefore, it is essential to deal with the 19th century as well, and not only with the preferred 20th century, because the period that is investigated here, saw a stable, peaceful and dynamic development for several decades and the memory of that period ought to be examined as well.

This study does not attempt to cover the complete field of the press (it would be impossible), but it concentrates on some of the national papers with a few minor local ones. The aim is to show both the similarities and the differences between the press sources of the history of the memory in Hungary in the age of the Dualist Monarchy.

### *Conclusion*

Based on the described points, the cult of the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, in a similar way to other cults, was in close relation to the orientation of the given papers. The most unique approach can be taken in the act in the articles published by *Független Magyarország* (Independent Hungary), which was influenced by Ferenc Kossuth, the son of Lajos Kossuth (the latter one was called the “Great Kossuth”). This daily supported the cult in the most consequent way. This organ used a sarcastic and deeply critical attitude towards the ruler, contrasting him with the sacralized memory of the martyrs. This paper also emphasized the moral responsibility of the king, Franz Joseph, in the execution of these heroes. This resulted in the fact that in the field of obedient loyalty to the king, only this paper was an exception. Other papers made huge effort to harmonise the loyalty with the cult of the martyr heroes, which caused a highly ambivalent and even schizophrenic attitude.

The *Alkotmány* (Constitution), which was a Catholic and conservative organ, divided its readers' attention with different topics in order to reduce the importance of the cult, which is exactly the opposite what the other, patriotic paper aimed at. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the Catholic paper neglected the memory of the martyrs, although the *Alkotmány* underrated its significance compared to the liberal approach.

The *Vasárnapi Ujság* (Sunday News) did not deal with the topic as often as other press products, due to its politically neutral tone and owing to the conflict-avoiding attitude of its editors. Thus, those issues, which could have been inconvenient for the ruler, were completely avoided.

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