The concept of vocational orders in Hungary between the two world wars

O conceito de organizações corporativas na Hungria entre as duas guerras mundiais

El concepto de organizaciones corporativas en Hungría entre las dos guerras mundiales

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Abstract

The recent study examines the philosophical background and thoughts of Hungarian Christian thinkers on a new state order between the two World Wars in Hungary. On the basis of historical sources and Hungarian literature, the author gives an insight into the political conditions and discussions of this time which emerged from the interpretation of papal encyclicals. The author also takes a deeper look at the theories of Vid Mihelics, Béla Kovrig and especially László Varga S.J. The article focuses on the creation of different organizations of vocational order in Hungary and the governmental attempts to initialize a new political and socio-economic system.

Keywords: History of Hungary; Catholic social thought; Solidarism; Subsidiarity; Corporative ideas; National Organization of the Vocational Order of Hungarian Workers.

Resumo

O estudo recente examina os fundamentos filosóficos e os pensamentos dos pensadores cristãos húngaros sobre uma nova ordem estadual estatal entre as duas guerras mundiais na Hungria. Com base em fontes históricas e na literatura húngara, o autor dá uma visão das condições políticas e das discussões desse tempo emergentes da interpretação das encíclicas papais, e faz uma análise mais profunda das teorias de Vid Mihelics, Béla Kovrig e especialmente László Varga S.J. O artigo enfoca a criação de diferentes organizações corporativas na Hungria e as tentativas governamentais de inicializar um novo sistema político e socioeconômico.

Palavras-chave: História da Hungria; Pensamento social católico; Solidariedade; Subsidiariedade; Ideias corporativas; Organização Nacional do Corporativismo dos Trabalhadores Húngaros

Resumen

El reciente estudio examina el trasfondo filosófico y los pensamientos de los pensadores cristianos húngaros sobre un nuevo orden de Estado entre las dos guerras mundiales en Hungría. Con base en fuentes históricas y de la literatura húngara, el autor ofrece una visión de las condiciones políticas y discusiones de este tiempo surgidas de la interpretación de las encíclicas, y papales, profundiza en las teorías de Vid Mihelics, Béla Kovrig y especialmente, László Varga S. J. El artículo se centra en la creación de diferentes organizaciones corporativas en Hungría y los intentos gubernamentales de comenzar un nuevo sistema político y socioeconómico.

Palabras clave: Historia de Hungría; Pensamiento social católico; Solidaridad; Subsidiariedad; Ideas corporativas; Organización Nacional del Corporativismo de los Trabajadores Húngaros.

The concept of vocational orders in Hungary between the two world wars

Interwar Europe became a breeding ground for a race of various concepts from the point of view of intellectual history. A commonality of different political ideas popular during the era was that they wished to radically break away from the overloaded forms of liberalism that had become almost hegemonic by the end of the 19th century and the patterns of plutocratic Manchester Capitalism resulting from liberalism. Serious criticism was voiced regarding individualism and the *homo oeconomicus* driven by market and profit maximization from the last third of the 19th century. At the same time, the ideas of community and social cohesion gained more emphasis, and questions of ethics and morals were re-explored by European intellectuals. Meanwhile, private profit was mostly contrasted with public good: all the moral, intellectual and economic goods "which are essential for the community of society and the members of this community, that is, the subsistence of smaller communities and individuals. According to this, public good is not the summary of private goods, but more than that" (Mihelics, 1940: 49). In the eyes of several contemporary thinkers, public good was violated by individualism, leading Europe and the socio-economic system of the continent into crisis.

Therefore, the need to create a new political and socio-economic system emerged, and became a postulate. Anti-liberalism became a negation of modern parliamentarism, anti-capitalism turned into the search for social justice, but in one way or another. There was a wide range of proposals in that direction, including attempts to build extremist, national and international socialist dictatorships, organize fascist state rule, and the establishment of a new society based on vocational orders that was close to corporative ideas, but was not an étatist state system. The prominent ideologues of the era were convinced that this new state order would enable society to get rid of the 'liberalistic' approach to state, and, at the same time, the 'total state' represented by Bolshevism (national socialism), fascism, or national socialism (Hitlerism). The focus of the analysis, that is, the idea of vocational orders, did not constitute a uniform ideology that could be described by general criteria. Contemporary intellectuals looking for answers (economists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, clerics) could base their concepts on several early antecedents and forerunners reaching back to the "organic society approach" by Saint Thomas Aquinas. (See in detail: Zachar, 2014: 67-119). A common characteristic of theories emerging in the era was that they did not approach the structure of the state from the aspect of the individual, but that of social groups. However, there was a wide range of concepts: certain theories even included the final elimination of democracy as a possibility, while others depicted the new type of state as the completion of participatory democracy. The

latter thought, based primarily on the social teachings of the Catholic church, recommended the creation of a new socioeconomic order based on subsidiarity, also providing space for democratic elements (Kék, 2013: 37-45). Its determinant documents were the *Rerum novarum* encyclical on the condition of the working classes, issued by Pope Leo XIII on 15 May 1891, and the *Quadragesimo anno* encyclical issued by Pope Pius XI, timed for the 40th anniversary of the great predecessor. These papal statements resulted in a more detailed elaboration of the system based on vocational orders, and several attempts to put the idea of solidarism and the idea of vocational orders into practice.

The appearance of these ideas in the Hungarian academic discourse around the turn of the century can be clearly noticed. Hungary was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the time, having undergone considerable development and modernization. The population of the dualist state increased from 35 million to 50 million during the peaceful years following 1867, and the country was one of the great powers according to its territorial and economic power. This increase in population also included the change of the Hungarian population from 15.5 million to almost 21 million. The feudal system of the Hungarian kingdom finally broke up, and new social groups such as a wealthy entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and an industrial working class emerged, while the agricultural community decreased as a result of economic changes. Contemporary Hungary was basically characterized by a dual, so-called "congested social structure", which involved a coexistence of several modern layers of a new embourgeoising society (labour class, bourgeois middle class, capitalist upper middle class) and the society of a world preceding the so-called bourgeois era (peasantry, small and medium landowners, landed gentry). The two social worlds were in constant interaction, and they had a significant influence on each other: the former nobility became the bourgeois middle class through economic processes and cultural changes, and became enterpreneurs and intellectuals, but, at the same time, its traditional lifestyle and mentality served as an example to follow for the newly forming bourgeois world (Halmos, 2010). Through the political debates and escalating crises of the "Belle Époque" and as a result of the fertilizing effect of embourgeoisement, the new Western forms of literature, fine arts and music spread within Hungary within a very short time around the turn of the century. This also created a favourable environment that served as a breeding ground for scientific discoveries and the quest for modern alternatives. Thus, West-European and American development tendencies in the era found a direct way into scientific discourse and professional arguments. In this respect, Hungary was not behind the states serving as the epicentre of development.

At the same time, the successes of the economy system of dualism in Hungary catching up with Western levels of development, and the belated, still forceful embourgeoisement see-

med to initially hide problems that Western European societies faced at an early stage. As contemporary Hungarian political thinking basically related to attitudes towards the dualist state system (the government supported the common state, and the opposition rejected it), ideological parties and political ideologies appeared in public life with a delay. Similarly to the Western model, the Marxism-based socialist teaching was the first to attempt to establish an organized framework, but in Hungary it could only launch its "missionary activity" among industrial workers with a delay, at a slower pace. The Hungarian political right, and, especially, the Catholic church were aware of its centuries of history and wealth-power status, thus did not wish to respond to the dangers of socialist activism in the Hungarian conditions of the era, and the challenges of liberalism that put wide groups into crisis. As a result, the church did not take a formal position on workers and social issues for quite long, and the expansion of political Catholicism in Hungary only started in the late 1870's (Gergely, 2007). However, it must also be noted that several members of the clergy possessed up-to-date information on the new ideas spreading in the Western part of the continent. This is demonstrated by the fact that the famous book by Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel Ketteler (*Die Arbeiterfrage und das Christenthum*) was translated into Hungarian in the year it was published in Germany: priest and teacher Gyula Katinszky (1841-1913) published it in Hungarian in 1864 and dedicated the work to the Archbishop of Eger. It is also relevant that the early romantic vocational order concepts of Adam Heinrich Müller and Franz von Baader became known in Hungary (Kovács K., 2007 and Adriányi, 1995). In addition to the ideas of Cardinal Archbishop János Simor (1813-1891), the breakthrough was a result of the work of two outstanding Catholic priests, Ottokár Prohászka and Sándor Giesswein. The Hungarian public and the Catholic political field got to know the new principles related to Pope Leo XIII, and the new Christian social ideas through their works.

Priest, scientist, diocesan, preacher, philosopher Ottokár Prohászka (1858-1927) translated the *Rerum novarum* encyclical and searched for a solution primarily on the pages of the Új *Magyar Sion* newspaper and his writing *Keresztény szociálista akció* (Christian social action) published in 1894: he rejected the socialist ideology based on Marxism, but embraced social sensitivity stemming from the Christian love of neighbour, and requested it above all (Prohászka, 1894: 66-67, 72-73). He strongly rejected the dark sides and abuses of Manchester capitalism. In his article titled *Liberalizmus utópia* (Liberalism – a utopia) published in 1896, he accepted that the achievements of political liberalism, that is, the ideas of citizenship and equality before the law are basically similar to the Catholic approach, but he thought that the unscrupulous and enslaving ideology of liberal capitalism had a devastating influence on moral and intellectual life (Prohászka, 1896: 2-5).

Both Prohászka and his contemporary Sándor Giesswein (1856-1923) were likely to see the overcoming of the liberal conservative political fault line in the newly forming, church-motivated trend, and they also expected the reform of the economic organization and the capitalist system from it. Therefore, they also tried to introduce modern Catholic politics: Prohászka did not only translate the encyclical into Hungarian, but also initiated the organization of the Catholic People's Party, which was intended to protect church interests on the political stage. Then the establishment of Christian labour associations, the promotion of social reform efforts and the approach towards democratic ideas started under the leadership of Giesswein. This was also reflected in the development of Giesswein's personality – he visited several European countries, knew eight languages by the age of 22, and his personality combined the characters of a pastor, a scholar, and a politician. In this regard, his ideology was modern and traditionalist at the same time. He adhered to his views and insisted on pursuing moral political activity: "[…] he was not a mass politician, even if he wished to convince masses of people. He did not want to convince masses for himself and the party, but for a purely noble idea" (Sáfrány, 2004). His editorial *Mit akarunk mi, kereszténységszocialisták* (What do the Christian-socialists want), published on 7 May 1905, served as the basis of a new political programme issued on the pages of *Igaz Szó* in November 1905, which also drew on the teachings of *Rerum novarum* and the Christian social efforts explained by Austrian reformer Karl von Vogelsang (1818-1890). Vogelsang was one of the outstanding figures of Austrian thinking on vocational orders and Christian Socialism, as Gergely (1977: 21) stated: "the theoretical father of the bourgeois anti-capitalistic Christian social movement that originated in Austrian conditions and promoted an organic Christian social order". Ludwig Reichhold (1968: 22) describes Vogelsang as the "European Anti-Marx", based on his efforts to "solve the labour class completely in the owners' class". The National Christian Social Party in Hungary (Országos Keresztény-Szocialista Párt) was organized based on his former Austrian program (László T., 2005: 54-59 and Zachar, 2014: 82-85). With that, social issues, societal reforms, and the need to restructure economy also became topics of Hungarian public political discourse from that point. More and more politicians thought that the access to subsistence, healthy life and cultural development must be available for all members of the society, and these rights can only be guaranteed through work as a human obligation (Egresi, 2008: 24-30).

These questions have become especially acute after World War I. Hungary was struck by a socialist coup (the Aster Revolution) in 1918, and a communist takeover (called Republic of Councils or Soviet Republic) in 1919; then a civil war situation followed. In the meantime, a significant part of the country was invaded by Romanian, Serbian and Czechoslovakian troops, preparing the country for the territorial division of the former Hungarian Kingdom. This was fi-

nally implemented by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 (Vizi, 2014: 11-40). Based on its provisions, economic isolation and protectionist economic policies followed in Central Europe, especially in the new nation-states formed on the ruins of empires. The punitive economic and financial measures of these "peace diktats" further aggravated the situation, leading to a decrease in export, a deficiency of productive capital, and unemployment.

We often find the same attributes and almost identical expressions in the various descriptions of crisis symptoms, even if they were written by scholars and thinkers who were not in contact with each other, or even had opposite political views. The famous Hungarian historian, Gyula Szekfü, might have expressed the zeitgeist of a whole generation in his legendary work *Három nemzedék* (Three Generations, 1920: 5). about the decline of European politics:

> "It is as if humanity fell to the depths from the proud heights of its millennium-long intellectual evolution. It is no wonder that teachings on the terminal decline of European culture spread if more and more of us face this possibility – the cruelest possibility of all that may reach Western society: our civilization may be in the period of terminal decline just like Greek and Roman civilizations were in the fourth and fifth centuries."

Philosophers of the crisis basically saw the way out in some new faith and the resulting reforms of the existing regime or its replacement by another system, as opposed to alienation, emerging barbarian tendencies, the rampage of overwhelming relativism and concrete crisis symptoms varying by country. The professional and political public of various countries agreed that the key to managing crises was not individualistic, disintegrating societies, but the strengthening of the community level. Another basic premise they mentioned was that it was insufficient to manage symptoms by the "surface treatment" of social tensions and economic and social problems, and more in-depth solutions were needed. This meant the establishment of a completely new political and socio-economic system in each case.

As Hungary had lost lots of its territory and the country had become poorer, there was no time to waste regarding national problems in the situation following the Treaty of Trianon. Because of the traumas experienced, the communist persecution of the church and atheism, the new clerical intelligentsia tried to exert political influence relying on the bureaucratic elite committed to Christian socialism (Bácsfainé, 2009: 14). The political elite led by Prime Minister István Bethlen and Governor Miklós Horthy announced a conservative Christian political programme including key elements such as the recovery of economy and the implementation of active social policies. They considered papal encyclicals as guidelines for their work, since they were regarded as no other than "the Magna Charta, the constitution of Christian social policies and social ideology", said papal prelate József Vass, Minister of Welfare and Labour, in

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connection with the creation of the social policies associated with his name. (Gergely, 1993: 40.) As a result, social policies in Hungary have undergone development that was also significant at a European level (In detail: Tomka, 2003). The Ministry of Welfare and Labour was lead by priests during its existence of twelve years, and they regularly used Christian social ideology based on papal encyclicals as a reference. József Vass cited the *Rerum novarum* encyclical, *inter alia*, in the parliamentary debate on the compulsory insurance regarding old people, disabilities, widowhood and orphanhood (László, 2005: 224-225).

However, the initial successful steps were halted in Hungary by the Great Depression of 1929, and the strengthening extremist (rightist and leftist) agitation resulting from the financial crisis. Under these circumstances, in his political programme from 1932, Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös announced the adoption of certain Italian corporative models that had proved successful. Therefore, representatives of the Catholic church also felt it important to make their voices heard. They also found the guidance of the encyclical by Pope Pius XI important, and active social discourse regarding vocational orders distinct from corporatism (and opposing corporatism) followed in Hungary. During the bishops' conference held in October 1931, Prince-Archbishop Jusztinián Serédi (1884–1945) proposed that the episcopate (lead by the Bishop of Csanád, Gyula Glattfelder) also take a stand regarding private property and market economy. Given the political conditions of the era, the Hungarian Bishop's Conference primarily focused on the Christian interpretation of wealth and private property in its circular, and therefore, according to Ormos (2012: 93) and Petrás (2013: 9), the circular could only be regarded as a "soft echo" of papal teachings. At the same time, the episcopate accepted the presence of vocational orders in Hungary and gave its support to the domestic promotion of ideas published in the papal encyclical. Hungarian Catholic priests also thought that the harmful socialist and liberal influence could be eliminated based on the new papal directions, and the opposition of social layers could be eliminated by the cooperation of Christian organizations of occupational fields (Gergely, 1995: 189-193).

The appearance of such organizations took place in Hungary within a short period of time in the 1930's. Similarly to Western models, the first organizational framework was Actio Catholica (AC), which appeared in public at the XXVI National Catholic Congress in October 1933, whose organizational structure was only finalized by 1936 (Gianone, 2010). It was active according to governing principles such as "Christ and family" and "Youth and Christ and village". The launch of these programmes catalysed the establishment of further organizations, so several layer organizations based on vocational orders (which protected their independence and only accepted theoretical guidance) were created under the umbrella organization

of Actio Catholica: young people graduating from school became members of the National Association of Catholic Young Workers (KIOE), or the National Body of Catholic Agricultural Youth Societies (KALOT), which was founded in 1935, and according to Balogh (1998), built a significant tradition and an outstanding historical role ever since. Then, in 1936, the Alliance of Catholic Girl Societies (KALÁSZ) was established under the patronage of Bishop Lajos Shvoy, which also focused on rural environment. Urban girls graduating from school may have become members of KLOSZ, and then Working Girls (DLO), while school students may have joined ILKA. We may consider folk high schools as the most important aspect in the life of each organization, which was primarily organized by KALOT (László, 2005: 217-220).

How many people could these organizations really reach? There are very different projections and the exact number of members can no longer be determined with certainty. From the very different information on the number of participations of KALOT, in our opinion, Ferenc Babóthy's account of membership is close to the truth: according to him, 631 local groups existed involving 100,000 members at the time KALOT was dissolved in 1946 (Kovács, 2005). Bishop Shvoy estimated the membership of KLOSZ, DLO, and KALÁSZ to 100,000 – 120,000 on 18 December 1941, explaining the mistakes of the so-called *levente* youth education in his speech in the upper house of parliament (Bácsfainé, 2009: 20). As a result, these organizations of vocational order were certainly strongly influencing the Hungarian population.

If we take a closer look at the day-to-day work of these organizations, between 1939 and 1941, "Secular people for Christ's Kingdom" (*Világiak Krisztus Országáért*) was the motto of the work programme of Actio Catholica for two years. In this context, it was important to strengthen the organization and establish strong leading groups including secular people. This was in line with the organization of labour groups that had already started before, but regained its momentum at the time. *Jövünk*, the paper of the Christian social trade union – following the measures of the Hungarian Conference of Catholic Bishops regarding this – launched the so-called Encyclical (*Enciklika*) movement in 1934, which aimed to promote the objectives of papal encyclicals in assemblies and conferences. Therefore, they presented Christian social actions from *Rerum novarum*, and vocational orders from *Quadragesimo anno* as two complementary ideas. The patron of the movement was Count Gyula Zichy, Archbishop of Kalocsa, and its most important leader was János Tobler, member of the parliament, the head of Hungarian Christian trade unions.

As – according to Vida (1990: 78-79) – the Christian social trade union movement was weak, the organization of industrial workers' groups was carried out by the organization called Parish Labour Groups (EMCS), and from 1937 by the Parish Labour Department (EMSZO).

However, the most influential labour organization in the late 1930's was Hungarian Workers' National Vocation Organization (Hivatásszervezet, HSZ) that became a national body from 1939. According to its own wording, the aim of EMSZO was not else than "the victory of vocational order-based economy as explained in *Quadragesimo anno*, as compared to the current capitalist economic system" (Gergely, 1977: 188). The organization promoted the abovementioned aims in its official paper (titled Új *Szociális Rend*, later Új *Rend*). The editor of the monthly paper was Ferenc Bihari, and its publisher was József Freesz; both leading figures of the movement. The paper often published writings on the new principles of social and economic organization by Hungarian thinkers of vocational orders, especially articles by father László Varga S. J. Nevertheless, EMSZO sought to educate workers culturally and spiritually in upcoming years, while Hungarian Workers' National Vocation Organization (HSZ) as a national body represented the cause of the development of the economic and social situation of workers (Bihari, 1938).

The support from the church, their interpretation of vocational orders, and the sensation of international tendencies within Hungary served as an inspiration for the prominent intellectuals of laic Catholic social science. This is well demonstrated by the fact that the most important Hungarian Christian social thinkers of vocational orders were invited to the archbishop's vicar conference in Budapest in spring 1939: József Freesz, head pastor of the EMSZO centre, Farkas Heller, university professor, Károly Huszár, former prime minister, head of the social section of AC, Béla Kovrig, university professor for social sciences, József Közi-Horváth, pastor, central secretary of AC, Vid Mihelics, university private professor, Ferenc Mikos, judge of the general court, János Tobler, member of the parliament, national chairman of Christian socialist trade unions, László Varga S. J., college professor, and István Vida, central secretary of EMSZO discussed the realization of a system based on vocational orders in Hungary.

When we examine ideologies in Hungary, we may agree with the explanation of the era stating that "the circle of Catholic intellectuals committed to reforms undertook nothing less than the application of Catholic social catechism to Hungarian conditions, in order to make Catholic suggestions that are clearly different from the criticism of the state from both right and left" (Petrás, 2013: 10). In the meantime, new journalistic organs were born (*Korunk Szava, Vigilia*, Új *Kor*), and countless books and studies were published (especially by two church-based companies, Magyar Szemle Társaság and Szent István Társulat), which, again, underlines the thesis I have mentioned before, that is, the intellectuals of contemporary Hungary could be placed in the mainstream of European ideologies and new views, and kept pace with the development tendencies of the era. The views and ideas emerging in Europe

produced a quick response –and in some cases serious criticism– in Hungarian Christian-conservative intellectual circles.

Ideologies spreading Europe-wide at the time included the universalist concept of Othmar Spann (1878-1950). Spann was as a consequence of his thoughts on a new state (Spann, 1921) one of the most influential thinkers of the 1920's and 1930's dealing with economics and social philosophy in the German speaking parts of Europe. His new order deprived the structure of the organic "true state" of faith and church teachings and had a fundamental influence on the creation of the Austrian "Ständestaat" concept (Zachar, 2014: 135-142). His ideas were discussed and documented in various debates in Hungary, but they did not leave a mark in the work of the thinkers of the Hungarian Christian conservative side. On the one hand, Hungarian solutions were mostly based on the corporative Italian state and the Austrian and Portuguese attempts somewhat different from it. On the other hand, they aimed to promote the implementation of the "social order" in connection with religious life, based on papal encyclicals and solidarist teachings (mostly by Gustav Gundlach and Oswald Nell-Breuning).

If we examine relevant contemporary documents and events, it becomes clear that we may regard Jesuit father László Varga (1901-1974) as the most significant Hungarian thinker of vocational orders. His thoughts are extremely significant imprints of Hungarian interwar theorizing as he always strove to give professional, precise and practical guidance based on facts of reality in order to resolve the social and economic crisis of the era. The focus of his ideas was the construction of a society based on vocational orders. He repeatedly gave voice to his opinion that the necessity of changes may not go unnoticed following the publication of *Quadragesimo anno*: the papal encyclical forces all thinkers open to reforms to express their standpoint regarding the spiritual, social, economic and societal problems mentioned in the encyclical (Varga, 1933). The search for solutions made it clear that the ways taken before had come to a dead end. The realization of socialist teachings abolished the significant driving force in economy that was created by the entrepreneurial character including initiative and organizational skills. According to the views of László Varga, this made effective production impossible. However, on the other hand, unlimited capitalism did not possess the moral powers that could have preserved human character and initiative within a rapidly improving world of technology (Varga, 1941). During the search for the way out, it also expressed the clear rejection of revolutionary solutions and dictatorial efforts. It also professed its faith in a strong state, whose role is to serve the nation as its most important organization of law, power and welfare. Society takes precedence in all issues, but it is further divided into smaller com-

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munities which strive to achieve partial aims besides common good. As Strausz (2011: 190) stated: the state therefore does the right thing if "it organizes economic society (or the society of those operating in economy) in a way that it serves national public interests independently, by directing itself according to social justice."

Regarding the structure and role of the state, father Varga clearly depicted a strong public authority responsible for public good, still within certain limits. According to him, the state was "nothing else than the public entity of social justice based on self-government" as a result of its fragmentation. The state actually becomes a servant of society through its help in making individuals achieve their aims more easily and completely, while public good is also realized. However, the state – in order to satisfy the theory of subsidiarity and maintain peace and common good – may not extend its responsibilities to tasks and issues that belong to individual citizens or smaller communities, because it would lead to the creation of a totalitarian regime (Varga, 1941: 19-23).

This all can only be achieved with the economic order defined by *Quadragesimo anno,* by the equality of work and capital, and the construction of the "society of work". In a society divided by families and working associations, then by the state, the reconciliation of individual freedom and public interests becomes possible, the class struggle is terminated, and social responsibility is no longer a private issue, but – through solidarity – a public matter (Varga, 1941: 25-31). Summarizing the traditional ideas of solidarism based on the works of ethicist and economist Heinrich Pesch S.J., László Varga's expectation was that social justice becomes the primary governing principle of national economy instead of the dictatorship of free competition and capital. By this, a fair distribution of incomes can be realized, and class struggle is replaced by the cooperation of various professions, besides the supervision and control of state power (Varga, 1933: 20-21). In this system, market economy does not give up on individual initiative, and provides an opportunity for individuals with outstanding skills to develop their talents, also stimulating enterprise in society. Following the footsteps of the Fribourg Union, *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*, László Varga also declares that profits and gains acquired in a fair and honest way are not morally questionable, and they are necessary in economy. However, he also emphasizes the dual nature of wealth and the social responsibility stemming from it (Varga, 1941: 65-67). In his research on the works of pater Varga, Rigó (2013: 20-57) found out that the most important consequence of the introduction of the vocational order system for Varga was in the fact that in contrast to capitalism, where profit has become the only norm of economic activities, the framework of the vocational order system only involves private interests as a force inspiring people to enterprise and work, while

the basic governing principle is the interest of public good, the law of social justice. Varga also strived to realize his beliefs on the stage of everyday politics.

Other prominent figures worth mentioning besides father Varga include Vid Mihelics (1899-1968) sociologist, journalist, editor, university professor, member of the parliament and Béla Kovrig (1900–1962) sociologist, politician, university professor. Their common political programme was to convince society to find the Christian social order that would protect and further develop the Hungarian state apparatus, even in times of extremist ideas, in midst of unlimited liberalism, Stalinist Bolshevism, Hitler's National Socialism and European authoritarian tendencies. "And what is the essence of this vocational order system?", wrote Mihelics in 1940, in the shadow of World War II. "The restoration of the appropriate order in the relationships of individual and community, minor communities and society, society and state, to make a people again out of the masses, whose activities, especially political and economic ones, are directed by its natural leaders in the name of social justice" (Mihelics, 1940). Therefore, it is indispensable to create a state apparatus with the objective of public good, and, at the same time, ensure the operation of small communities, social groups, and vocational order organizations. In other words, the modern state "must not exceed the degree of intervention necessary to remedy matters and avert dangers". On that account, the state supplemented by vocational order structures "may only limit the rights and freedom of citizens to an extent required by the interests of public good. After all, public good is one carried by the state, and it is not the ultimate goal of citizens, but a tool for the achievement of the absolute human aim" (Mihelics, 1933: 31-32).

The thoughts of Mihelics and Kovrig on the separation of the dimensions of vocational orders and the mostly corporative and authoritarian state system were extremely far-reaching; especially in the light that the communist power set up in Hungary after 1945 did everything to conflate fascist corporatism and nazi totalitarian social control structures with the Christian thought of vocational orders, which was basically against those two ideas (Strausz, 2011: 180). Mihelics and several other Catholic thinkers (for example, vocational order authors gathering around *Korunk Szava*) distanced themselves from corporatism on a theoretical basis, which was "an individual intellectual achievement" (Petrás, 2013: 18). The new way for them was the balancing of interests and social reforms, whose tool was the idea of vocational orders, which they clearly distinguished and distanced from former corporatist or totalitarian efforts.

One of the most exciting segments of the Hungarian debate was the practical implementation of theories, which was different from other European models in many ways. However, the limitations of the present study do not allow a detailed analysis of the governmental alter-

natives of social and economic reorganization. I believe that the essential elements of these ideas coming up three times during the governments of Gyula Gömbös, Béla Imrédy and Pál Teleki have been sufficiently documented by Péter Strausz in his latest works (2010: 83-122). These three attempts proved each unsuccessful.

The first attempt is connected to the Gömbös-government. After gaining power in 1932, Gyula Gömbös wanted to replace the traditional conservative-liberal parliamentary government with a new, modern, dynamic political and socio-economic system. It was called a "self-sustaining" (öncélú) anti-libertarian, in other words authoritarian state: Gömbös believed that political power must be centralized and the authority of the Hungarian parliament and some other branches of government curtailed. Therefore, Gömbös was an advocate of a new state-order that was inspired by Italian-style corporatism. His ideas were summarized in the National Work Plan or the 95 points in its final version. Gömbös called for state intervention in economics and finance; he wanted to reform labor relations based on the Italian Carta del Lavoro; socialist trade unions were to be banned and should be replaced by a new form of economic corporations. In April 1935, the cabinet discussed a bill for the creation of professional corporations (chambers) as statutory bodies of interest protection in the field of production and employment. But, because of his unexpected death in 1936 and the emerging opposition of the traditional conservative politicians, the reform attempts of Gömbös ended without the creation of a new corporatist economic or political structure (Macartney, 1956-57).

The second failed attempt to change the politicalsocio-economic system of Hungary came from prime minister Béla Imrédy. Although he was considered a moderate financial expert, a Christian pragmatist with excellent connections in the international money market and, therefore, a reasonable choice to stop the rise of the Hungarian National Socialists led by Ferenc Szálasi, Imrédy came out with a corporatist program to transform Hungarian society and economy in 1938. His program was inspired by a visit to Benito Mussolini in the summer of the same year. The Duce advised Imrédy to come up with a new political program with solid social reforms, the development of corporatist organizations or the introduction of the program of "Dopolavoro", the Italian fascist leisure organization. In the following Imrédy announced a sweeping social program, including the redistribution of large estates, the transformation of the economic structure and the formation of a new mass-movement called Movement of Hungarian Life, with which he intended to replace the government party just like in Italy or Austria (Cornelius, 2011). But again: the prime ministers plan of groundbreaking reforms of the Hungarian political system had run into very harsh opposition. It was again István Bethlen, the leader of the opposition conservatives, who organized a cross-party voting coalition against

Imrédy's government. After losing a vote of no confidence on a point of procedure, Imrédy resigned from the government in November 1938.

The third governmental attempt to introduce a new state-order in Hungary emerged with the outbreak of the military conflicts: after the beginning of WWII the government led by Pál Teleki focused on keeping away Hungary from the war. One aspect of this endeavor was to bring a social and governmental reform into the field of administration and economy. But this reform was not inspired by the Italian-style corporatism at all. The real thinktanks of the planned Teleki-reform were the different organizations and intellectuals devoted to a new, Christian and social vocational order. Teleki's main advisors during the preparation of a new state order were the above mentioned Christian thinkers of the interwar period: Béla Kovrig, Vid Mihelich, László Varga or István Vida. But in the end this third attempt also vanished due to the far-right politicians in Hungary, who tried to make the new model their own and who tried to monopolize the discussions about the initiation of vocational orders in Hungary (Strausz, 2011).

In addition, the three attempts involved the evolution of three basically different concepts in interwar Hungary. Despite the definition of the concepts at a high level, the overall reorganization of economy and society based on vocational orders or corporative ideas was not implemented in Interwar-Hungary (*Csonka-Magyarország*, Smaller Hungary as it was called by many politicians after the Trianon Treaty). The only actual practical solution of the era was proposed by the Vocation Organization of Szeged, which only existed for a short time, but displayed great social organizing force (its official name in Hungarian was Szegedi Ipari Munkavállalók Hivatásszervezete, then, as a national organization, Magyar Dolgozók Országos Hivatásszervezete /National Organization of the Vocational Order of Hungarian Workers). What makes the question even more interesting is that the most important figures of the initiating efforts of Hungarian Catholic vocational order organizations mentioned in *Quadragesimo anno* in Hungary were Jesuit priests graduating from sociological programmes of German and Austrian universities. They provided the most important figures of the Hungarian interpretation of the idea of vocational orders, and they also undertook the task of the practical realization of theories published by Pope Pius XI. As Rigó and Zachar (2013: 125-146) show us: the young Jesuits of Szeged gathering around Varga László S. J., and members of the lower clergy sympathizing with them, especially Jenö P. Kerkai, and later on, Gyula Glattfelder, Bishop of Csanád, also took part in the promotion, launch and support of the organization. Its operation was independent of parties and denominations. Therefore, it became a new kind of a national trade union within five years, counting almost 100,000 members and 20 secretariats

in cities and counties. The significance of the organization is well proved by the fact that it was dissolved two times during the era of dictatorships: the nazi government made a decision to terminate Vocation Organizations during 1944, and the communist power took a similar position in 1945.

If we consider the abovementioned tendencies and examine the Hungarian version of the modern age discourse on state and economy, as well as the social issues related to them, we can say without exaggeration that the Hungarian scholasticism of the first half of the twentieth century not only kept pace with developments in Europe, but greatly contributed to the broadening and deepening of the debate. As I have pointed out, the idea of social and economic reorganization on a new basis was not limited to a narrow circle of people who could be labeled as right-wing, reactionary, or fascist. These ideas formed a widespread ideology which could become a part of political "mainstream". Considering the social dimension, we can state that they served as a reference for political thinking, including the socialist labour movement, political Catholicism, and extreme national socialist ideologies. It was a need to create a strong state with social justice and a hierarchical society ruled by an elite of virtue. The social teaching of the Catholic church greatly contributed to the creation of a modern market economy and state apparatus model in European history after 1945. In this sense, the four basic principles also expressed in Hungarian Vocation Organization documents in interwar efforts proved to be decisive: the theory of personality, that is, human dignity is the decisive factor as opposed to individualism and totalitarianism; the theory of solidarity, that is, individuals are present in socio-economic processes together with others, and therefore share responsibilities as well; the theory of subsidiarity, that is, the self-government of individuals and small groups in matters that can be handled this way more easily than by the whole community; and the theory of public good, that is, the state is a partner in the development of social groups, and with its help particular interests can be overshadowed as opposed to the interests of the entire community.

Father László Varga, Béla Kovrig and Vid Mihelics renewed the interwar state concept from the aspect of Catholic vocational orders and subsidiarity. They had images of the future with optimism and belief in the essential goodness of man. They detected fatal errors in the principles of liberalism and capitalism which had to be corrected. Their new concept of vocational orders was an attempt to create a modern version of a historical concept of a united society in which the various components each play an important part just as various parts of the body serve specific roles in the life of a body. However, this is quite consistent with Montesquieu's views on the separation and balancing of powers (that is, checks and balances). They included the role of public good and civil society in political thinking and also pointed

out the importance of two new powers: economy and media. This attitude is indicative of the religious, social and practical political views of authors relying on solidarism and Christian social ideas, providing the mainstream of Hungarian thinking on vocational orders, who attempted to protect their concept from unbounded libertarian and totalitarian ideas (being an inherent danger). All in all, we can state that Hungarian thinkers took a basically important step towards a re-interpretation of vocational orders and its application in a modern Christian democratic framework – their ideology was an independent intellectual product, but it was established in line with similar contemporary Western European trends. However, this Christian humanistic alternative for Hungary fell during World War II in the struggle with the nazi regime and some years later in the struggle with the Stalinist totalitarian system. The thought leaders of the vocational order ideology either left the country immediately or were forced by the gradually strengthening dictatorship to go in exile, first internal then external. There was no space left for Christian democratic political activity in this part of Central Europe languishing under Soviet occupation.

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