THE BASTION OF CHRISTENDOM

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Abstract The Institute of Hungarian Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Debrecen formed a research group in 2010 in order to launch the research of Hungarian realms of memory. This paper was written within the frameworks of the research group. Its basic hypothesis is that the identification of Hungary as the Bastion of Christendom is an established part of Hungarian collective memory. This paper attempts to demonstrate the changes of this realm of memory, regarding its meaning and function, from its formation up to the present day.
Keywords Realms of memory, Pierre Nora, collective memory, Hungary, bastion of Christendom.

In 2010 a research programme started at the Institute of Hungarian Literary and Cultural Studies at University of Debrecen with the title *Hungarian Realms of Memory*. The research group undertook to set up an internet site which would serve as a continuously developing storehouse for Hungarian realms of memory.[1] The plan is to link each realm of memory to a short, introductory study and to other documents. The present study is an expanded version of an exploratory study of this kind of entry. Its structure follows the principles established by the research group, and it is in this sense that the article differs from previous summaries regarding the bastion of Christendom.[2]

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[1] The *(Web) Sites of Hungarian Memory* can be found at the following link: http://deba.unideb.hu/deba/emlekezethely/index.php (Accessed in November 2020).
[2] Lajos Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige életrajza: Magyarország a kereszténység védőbástyája," *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* 60, no. 7-12 (July-December 1936): 297–351. László Veszprémy, "A 'kereszténység védőbástyája'," in *Magyar Művelődéstörténeti Lexikon*, ed. Péter Kőszeghy (Budapest: Balassi, 2006), vol 5: 336–37. Cf. Ignác Romsics, "A kereszténység védőpajzsától az

The age of the object of memory

As is widely known, Pierre Nora linked the creation of realms of memory with the formation of modern nations. According to his theory, the recognition of the interruption between the past and the present motivates communities organised into nations to preserve the past. The collective remembering through realms of memory functions as a creator and shaper of national identity.[3] Nora, however, did not consider what it was that characterised the functioning of the collective memory of the period before realms of memory.

By investigating early versions of national identity, recent scholars of the early modern era have dealt with this question on several levels.[4] The problem of collective remembering and collective memory has occurred again and again in the study of home and nation, patriotism and identity, but in the context of the early modern period Nora's conception has not been addressed. In Hungary, Pál S. Varga outlined a theory about what differentiates the periods before and after the realms of memory. He believes the most essential difference between pre-modern and modern memory is in their evaluation of the relationship between the past and the present. The pre-modern approach conceptualised the past and the present as one unbroken process, where the past did not stand apart from the present, was not separated and preserved intact from oblivion, but acted as a rich store of examples from which the present could learn useful lessons.[5] This statement certainly needs to

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uniós tagságig," in *Mi a magyar*, ed. Ignác Romsics and Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (Budapest: Habsburg Történeti Intézet – Rubicon, 2005), 202–30, which in many respects is similar to the present survey.

[3] Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), vol. 1: 1–2.

[4] See, for example, David Cressy, "National Memory in Early Modern England," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 61–73. Norman Housley, "Pro deo et patria mori: Sanctified Patriotism in Europe, 1400–1600," in *War and Competition between States*, ed. Philippe Contamine (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press – Clarendon Press, 2000), 221–48. Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2004. Robert von Friedeburg, ed., *Patria und Patrioten vor dem Patriotismus: Pflichten, Rechte, Glauben und die Rekonfigurierung europäischer Gemeinwesen im 17. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005). Balázs Trencsényi, Márton Zászkaliczky, ed., *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2010).

[5] Pál S. Varga, "Introduction," in *The Theoretical Foundations of Hungarian 'lieux de mémoire' Studies / Theoretische Grundlagen der Erforschung ungarischer Erinnerungsorte*, ed. Pál S.

be refined, but this would require the kind of research which examines memory in the early modern period from the perspective of its relationship with the past. The present article does not attempt to formulate any hypothesis regarding the period prior to the creation of realms of memory; it was only our intention in this short introduction to indicate the unresolved nature of the problem.

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So, we know little about how memory worked, what function it fulfilled in the period before the realms of memory, and how the separation between the past and the present was felt; what, however, is sure is that at that time there were elements of a kind of collective awareness which were particularly important in the emergence and maintenance of ethnic and religious group consciousness. The concept of the defensive bastion of Christendom as it developed in the frontier region between Islam and Christendom can also be considered as such.

According to the theory developed by John Armstrong, the two great civilisations of the early medieval period in Europe, Islam and Christianity, did not just differ from each other in their lifestyles (nomadic/territorial), but in the religious sense as well. Both of them constructed legitimisation myths for themselves, which emphasised their differences, their mutual opposition and their need to defend their own identity. In this way was born the Christian concept of *miles fidei Christiane/defensor fidei* and its Islamic counterpart, the *ghazi*, the holy warrior of Islam. The two communities became permanent reference points for each other, and their opposition to each other was a source of strength in creating identity. The defence of the frontier territory was raised to mythical levels by both sides, and those who lived there developed a sense of their own chosenness and superiority, which can also be considered a particular, early version of national identity.[6]

One example of this on the Islamic side was Bosnia, whose self-interpretation from the 15th century – at which time an increasing part of its territory came under the authority of the Ottoman Empire, and the process of the islamicisation of the population began – appeared in the role of a defensive bastion of Islam.[7] On the other side of the frontier the concept of the defensive

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Varga, Karl Katschthaler, Donald E. Morse, Miklós Takács (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2013), 14.

6 John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 90–92. On Hungary's frontier situation, see Sándor Őze, *A határ és a határtalan: Identitáselemek vizsgálata a 16. századi magyar ütközőzóna népességénél* (Budapest: METEM, 2006).

7 Ivo Žanić, "The Symbolic Identity of Croatia in the Triangle Crossroads–Bulwark–Bridge," in *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*, ed. Pål Kolstø (London: Hurst & Company,

bastion of Christianity made its appearance,[8] which spread and was emphasised when the Christians and Muslims clashed on the battlefield: in the Crusades during the 11th to 13th centuries, during the 13th century Mongol invasions and with the start of the extension of the Ottoman Empire into Europe in the 14th century. The main vehicles of the concept were the peoples and countries which played a role in the struggle against the Muslims: the Franks who liberated Jerusalem, the Spanish who fought against the Moors and the countries which stood in the way of the Ottoman advance – Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Poland, and not least of all, Hungary.[9]

2005), 42–45. Srećko M. Džaja, "Bosnian Historical Reality and its Reflection in Myth," in Kolstø, *Myths and Boundaries*, 113–14.

8 In the works I have used, the earliest appearance of the expression "antemurale Christianitatis" is by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and dates back to 1143; he uses it in reference to the Franks who defended the city of Edessa against the Muslims. See Žanić, "The Symbolic Identity of Croatia," 37. We cannot exclude the possibility, indeed we can assume, that it was also used prior to this.

9 Regarding Albania: Arrigo Petacco, *L'ultima crociata: Quando gli ottomani arrivarono alle porte dell'Europa* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007), 43. Cecilie Endresen, "'Do not look to church and mosque'? Albania's post-Communist clergy on nation and religion," in *Religion und Kultur im albanischsprachigen Südosteuropa*, ed. Oliver Jens Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main etc.: Peter Lang, 2010), 249–50; On Serbia: Ana Antić, "The Evolution of Boundary: Defining historical myths in Serbian academic and public opinion in the 1990s," in Kolstø, *Myths and Boundaries*, 191–222; On Croatia: Žanić, "The Symbolic Identity of Croatia". Darko Novaković, "Quis servabit servatores: Guerra e pace nella letteratura umanistica croata," in *Guerra e pace nel pensiero del Rinascimento*, ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi (Florence: Casati, 2005), 493–506. István Lőkös, "A Judit- és Holofernész-téma a horvát és magyar reneszánsz epikában," in István Lőkös, *Déli szláv–magyar szellemi kapcsolatok: Tanulmányok* (Miskolc: Felsőmagyarország, 1997), 48–49. On Poland: Lajos Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas" humanista eszméje a magyar–lengyel hagyományban* (Budapest: Balassi, 1992). Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowa, "Poland as 'Antemurale Christianitatis': The Political and Ideological Foundations of the Idea," *Polish Western Affairs* 33, no. 2 (1992): 3–24. Norman Davies, "Polish National Mythologies," in *Myths and Nationhood*, ed. Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 145. With reference to several areas, and summarising works: Paul Srodecki, "Antemurale Christianitatis," in *Religiöse Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa: Konstitution und Konkurrenz im nationen- und epochenübergreifenden Zugriff*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Stefan Rohdewald, Thomas Wünsch (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 804–22. Enlarged version: Paul Srodecki, *Antemurale Christianitatis* (Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, 2015). As European realm of memory: Anne Cornelia Kenneweg, "Antemurale Christianitatis," in *Europäische Erinnerungsorte*, ed. Pim den Boer, Heinz Duchhardt, Georg Kreis, Wolfgang Schmale (München: Oldenbourg, 2012), vol. 2: 73–81.

The age of memory I: collective memory before the creation of realms of memory

Given its geographical situation, the concept of a defensive bastion of Christianity emerged in Hungary after the country's adoption of Christianity, and the Hungarian ruler took on for himself the role of *defensor fidei*, *athleta Christi* or *miles fidei Christiane*.[10] In the case of Stephen I, Hungary's first king who named himself *defensor Christianitatis* in his own law book, this traditional role meant the struggle undertaken against Hungarian pagans,[11] while for later Hungarian kings this always meant first and foremost taking up the fight against the dangers threatening from outside Christianity.

Our first information comes from the period of the Mongol conquests. In 1238 Pope Gregory IX named King Béla IV of Hungary (1235-1270) "fortis athleta Christi.[12]" At the time of the renewed danger from the Mongols, around 1250, Béla IV wrote a letter to the pope appealing for help, mentioning the country as the gateway to Christianity, through which the Mongols could easily pour into the whole of Europe. The conception behind this also served Béla IV later on – after the immediate danger from the Mongols had passed – when he tried to gain favours and concessions from the pope.[13]

The Roman pontiffs were happy to reinforce the Hungarian kings in their role, i.e. they expected them to offer defence both against the pagans and the heretics.[14] In a letter of 1356, Pope Innocent VI urged Louis the Great, King of Hungary (1342-1382) to fight against the heretics, describing him as the champion of Christ.[15] The earliest appearance so far known of the expression 'the defensive wall and shield of Christianity' was also in a papal letter: in 1410 King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387-1437) received this title from the antipope John XXIII after his achievements in the struggle against the Ottomans.[16] The Hungarian king himself

10 For the history of the concept of the defensive bastion of Christendom, apart from the works listed in note 2, see Kálmán Benda, *A magyar nemzeti hivatástudat története (A XV–XVII. században)* (Budapest: Bethlen-nyomda, 1937). Őze, *A határ és a határtalan*, 43–51. Sándor Őze, *"Bűneiért bünteti Isten a magyar népet": Egy bibliai párhuzam vizsgálata a XVI. századi nyomtatott egyházi irodalom alapján* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 1991). Mihály Imre, *"Magyarország panasza": A Querela Hungariae toposz a XVI–XVII. század irodalmában* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1995), 143–73.

11 Levente Závodszky, *Szent István, Szent László és Kálmán korabeli törvények és zsinati határozatok forrásai* (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1904), 27.

12 Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 307.

13 See, Nóra Berend, "Magyarország, a kereszténység kapuja: egy ideológia születése," in *Tatárjárás*, ed. Balázs Nagy (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), 612–20.

14 Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 304–9.

15 Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas"*, 12.

16 Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 304.

consciously undertook to be the "advocatus et defensor Ecclesiae.[17]"

Following the Ottoman advance into the Balkans, Hungary's role in the defence of Christendom received an ever-greater emphasis. The use of the topos of the defensive bastion fulfilled a religious-ideological function, in the sense that it created the basis for Christian Europe's struggle against the Ottoman army, and at the same time served a political and military aim, recruiting allies and military assistance.

Given their situation, it was a vital interest of the Hungarians that they make this role a self-image for the whole community. The pope, and first and foremost, those states that would have found themselves threatened if Hungary had fallen, had an interest in reinforcing the country in its vocation, since their own territorial integrity depended on it.[18]

When, in 1440, Władysław III, the King of Poland, was crowned King of Hungary, the news was announced in celebratory fashion, that Poland and Hungary shared a similar mission: they were both the rock wall and shield of Christendom against the barbarians.[19] The leader of the campaign against the Ottomans, John Hunyadi, became a model of the victorious Christian military leader.[20] He is described as such by Petrus Ransanus in his historical work, and also appears in papal letters and in the Hunyadi epitaph written by the humanist Janus Pannonius.[21] This image is reinforced by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's, the future Pope Pius II, letter to Pope Nicholas V, in which Hunyadi's speech before the second Battle of Kosovo (1448) urging his troops on appears as an expression of the sense of mission of the Christian military leader. An iconographic version of this embodiment in the person of John Hunyadi is also known, appearing as an illustration in the *Chronicle* of the 15th-century historian János Thuróczy (published in Brünn, Augsburg, 1448).[22] The mourning verses that emerged following his death also commemorate him as a defensive bastion of Christendom.

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[17] Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas"*, 15.

18 See, János Győry, *A kereszténység védőbástyája: Magyarország képe a XVI. századi francia irodalomban* (Budapest: Dunántúl Pécsi Egyetemi Könyvkiadó és Nyomda Rt., 1933). Sándor Csernus, *A középkori francia nyelvű történetírás és Magyarország (13–15. század)* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 215–63. Magda Horváth, *A török veszedelem a német közvéleményben* (Budapest: Dunántúl Pécsi Egyetemi Könyvkiadó és Nyomda Rt., 1937). Magda Jászay, *A kereszténység védőbástyája olasz szemmel: Olasz kortárs írók a XV–XVIII. századi Magyarországról* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1996). Edgár Artner, coll. and prep. for publ., *"Magyarország mint a nyugati kereszténység védőbástyája"*, ed. Kornél Szovák, József Török, Péter Tusor (Budapest – Rome: PPKE Egyháztörténeti Kutatócsoportja, 2004).

[19] Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas"*, 17.

20 Géza Galavics, *Kössünk kardot az pogány ellen: török háborúk és képzőművészet* (Budapest: Képzőművészeti, 1986), 13.

21 Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas"*, 29.

22 Galavics, *Kössünk kardot*, 12, 63.

Just like the victorious military leaders (John Hunyadi, Pál Kinizsi etc.), the sites of battles acted as examples of the Hungarian people's successfully completed mission. Beyond this they also had further significance: they proved that the Ottomans were not invincible and that it was therefore worth fighting them. This was the case in the anti-Ottoman propaganda in Szeben (Sibiu, present-day Romania), after Hunyadi successfully broke the Ottoman siege in 1442. Pope Eugene IV gave the city the title "The safe stronghold and defensive bastion of the whole of Christendom". The case of Belgrade in Serbia was an even clearer example of this phenomenon, as the ritual ringing of bells in commemoration of the victory ordered by Callixtus III has continued, with some minor changes, right up to the present day.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Europe turned its attention with increasing anxiety to the eastern half of the *Respublica Christiana.* In this period there was a great increase in the issuing of challenges to the Christian states to join in the war against the Ottomans. The idea of 'Hungary, the defensive bastion of Christendom' (*Hungaria, propugnaculum Christianitatis*) became a rhetorical topos and was used to serve political and military ends. It was used in many of the above-mentioned Piccolomini's writings when he wished to emphasise that Hungary was the shield of the Christian faith, and so Europe must help the Hungarians, in its own interest.[23]

At the time of King Matthias I (Matthias Hunyadi or Corvinus) (1458-1490) reign the expression found two forms. Firstly, the expression 'Hungary, the defensive bastion of Christendom' became a commonplace, thanks to the victories won against the Ottomans; secondly, it was used to motivate certain power-political interests. The latter is demonstrated by a whole series of diplomatic documents, letters, humanists' orations, poems and historical works, which also showed a great variety of functions. The Pope referred to Hungary's mission against the Ottomans when he tried to prevent King Matthias from going to war against Friedrich III, the Holy Roman Emperor (1452-1493), arguing that he should take on the Ottomans instead; he also used it when he called on the Christian monarchs to rally together against the pagans. Matthias himself used it as a means of applying pressure when he turned to Christian Europe for help: if this defensive bastion falls, the path will be freed for an Ottoman advance. Towards the end of his reign, however, the defence of Christendom appears in a different context and with a different function. The attention of the Hungarian monarch in the last years of his reign was fixed on the chances of his illegitimate son, John Corvinus inheriting the crown. In this respect, what he and his family had done in this area of activity could help him in two ways.

23 „Ungari, qui hactenus nostrae fidei clypeus, nostrae religionis murus fuere." Quoted in Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas"*, 26. For Piccolomini's role in the characteristic dissemination of the defensive bastion of Chistendom, see József Marton, "Magyarország képe és megítélése Enea Silvio Piccolomini életművében," *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 110, no. 5 (2006): 469–77.

First of all, it could show that in order to fulfil the challenge, he could be raised to the royal throne, and secondly it offered a promise for the future: the Hunyadi family considered it their inheritance and holy duty to fight against the Ottomans, and their heirs could not give up this duty either. Matthias, for example, employed the historian Antonio Bonfini and the chronicler János Thuróczy and entrusted them with the task of communicating this message. However, if his political goals demanded it, Matthias did not flinch from emphasising the common Scythian origin of the Turks and the Hungarians, and thus putting in temporary parenthesis the two peoples' religious differences and Hungary's role as a defensive bastion of Christendom.[24]

In the 15th century Hungary's mission to defend Christendom emerges primarily in diplomatic documents, and only rarely in other genres;[25] in graphic arts the concept of the defensive bastion only appears indirectly. There is no illustration from this period which provides a picture of this concept, but there are many works presenting the *miles fidei Christiane* (e.g., in the previously mentioned Thuróczy's *Chronicle*), or preserving contemporary battles. They had a dual function: both informative and as propaganda for the successful struggle.[26]

After Matthias's death the earlier successful role of the Hungarian people had to be exchanged for that of martyr and victim.[27] Assistance from Christian states was once again delayed. The situation was made worse by the fact that Hungary itself was not united; opposing interests had divided the country. The appeals for help became ever louder: Louis II of Hungary (1516–1526) and his ambassadors cited Hungary's role as a defensive bastion when attempting to solicit help from Europe, and by recalling the memory of King Matthias as a victorious defender, they encouraged Hungarians to fight a defensive war. After the defeat at the Battle of Mohács (1526), and above all, after the loss of Buda to the Ottomans (1541), it became clear that Hungary was no longer able to defend Christendom.

So, explanations were sought, which in turn led to a search for a scapegoat. In European public opinion voices blaming the Hungarians were to the fore. István Brodarics, royal chancellor and an eye witness of the Battle of Mohács responded to the criticisms of the German humanist Johannes Cuspinianus, reminding him that the

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[24] Pál Fodor, "The View of the Turk in Hungary: The Apocalyptic Tradition and the Legend of the Red Apple in Ottoman-Hungarian Context," in *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople*, ed. Benjamin Lellouch, Stéphane Yerasimos (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 99–131.

[25] Imre, *"Magyarország panasza"*, 99–100.

[26] Galavics, *Kössünk kardot*, 8.

27 Aleida Assmann mentions three roles assigned for the nation: the victor, the martyr and the victim. Her conclusions are also valid with reference to memory and the Hungarian nation. See, Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: C. H. Beck, 2006), 64–84.

Hungarians had defended Christian society for the last five hundred years with their own blood.[28] In Hungary, Catholics and Protestants had different opinions about the situation which had arisen and the possible solutions, most often blaming each other. The Catholics believed that the heretical beliefs of the Protestants had led to the catastrophe. Representatives of the new faith found their explanation in the sins of the Catholics, in that they were incapable of recognising the true faith. However, on one point they were often agreed: the advance of the Ottomans was the action of the Lord himself, who was punishing the country for its moral degeneracy and its many sins.[29]

The two parties viewed the struggle against the Ottomans differently. The Protestants' position was ambiguous, and Luther himself frequently changed his viewpoint.[30] Before Mohács and the siege of Vienna (1529), Luther was opposed to a crusade against the Ottomans because he believed that the Ottomans were God's punishment for sins, and that the only solution was not a struggle, but repentance. In the background, however, was the fear that any campaign against the Ottomans would reinforce Rome's power. After 1526 and 1529, when the Ottomans were threatening Germany too, the reformer changed his opinion. Luther then urged the fight against the Ottomans, but entrusted the war to the authority of the Emperor and the worldly powers, the task of the simple Christian being repentance.[31]

Hungary was also familiar with the image of God as a punisher of the people. One of the first appearances was Rogerius' *Carmen Miserabile*.[32] There were other examples of its use later,[33] but it became widespread in the 16th-century Protestant texts.[34] The Protestant authors only used the defensive bastion topos rarely, and then only in reference to God and not to the Hungarians, perhaps because Luther forbade anyone to refer to any Hungarians represented in these works as defenders of Christianity. This might explain why most of the texts in which

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[28] Stephanus Brodericus, *De conflictu Hungarorum cum Solymano Turcarum imperatore ad Mohach historia verissima*, ed. Petrus Kulcsár (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1985), Ad lectorem praefatio, 21–22.

[29] For the ancient manifestation of the idea of the enemy sent as a divine punishment, see Fodor, "The View of the Turk," 104–5.

[30] For Protestant judgements on the wars against the Ottomans, see Imre, *"Magyarország panasza"*, passim.

31 Horváth, *A török veszedelem*, 12–3, 28–37; Őze, *"Bűneiért bünteti Isten a magyar népet"*, 102–6.

[32] Rogerius, "Carmen miserabile," ed. Ladislaus Juhász, in *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery (Budapest: Nap, 1999, reprint: Academia Litter. Hungarica atque Societate Histor. Hungarica, 1938), vol. 2: 551–52.

33 See, for example, the forward to the Franciscan preacher, Osvát Laskai's work *Gemma fidei*. Cf. Edit Madas, "A prédikáció magvetésével a magyar nemzet védelmében: Laskai Osvát Gemma fidei című prédikációs kötetének előszava," in *Religió, retorika, nemzettudat régi irodalmunkban*, ed. István Bitskey, Szabolcs Oláh (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2004), 52–53.

34 See, Őze, *"Bűneiért bünteti Isten a magyar népet"*, passim.

Hungary appears in this role were primarily in Latin and only a small proportion appeared in the native language.[35]

From the end of the 16th century the Catholics began to propagate more and more forcefully the idea of Patrona Hungariae, according to which King Stephen I (1001-1038) had offered Hungary to the Virgin Mary. The Catholics argued that it was because the Protestants had insulted and abandoned the cult of Hungary's protector, Mary, that the country was overwhelmed with problems.[36]

Those authors who did not only deal with the problem of the wars against the Ottomans from a purely religious-sectarian perspective, but also from a practical, political one, blamed the factious nature of the Hungarian people. In both cases, Hungary as the bastion of Christianity was mentioned as a shining example from the recent past and a warning lesson for the bitter present situation.[37]

The motif fulfilled other functions, however, which were also political, when the message was directed at foreigners. The ambassadorial addresses, whose purpose was to win support for the struggle against the Ottomans from Europe still made use of the former glory of Hungary, and its role in defending Christendom, which by this time, in the German public opinion was only limited to the defence of Germania.[38]

We also find examples of situations in which the concept of the defensive bastion of Christendom was used to represent the power interests of certain groups. The propaganda used in Ferdinand of Hapsburg's struggle for the throne portrayed the Hapsburgs in the role of defenders of Christendom,[39] while John Szapolyai was referred to as a godless evildoer, who had entered into an alliance with the enemies of Christianity. Also, by portraying Maria Hapsburg's late husband, Louis II as a martyr, and her family as a bastion of Christendom, the Queen was able to serve the

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[35] Imre, *"Magyarország panasza"*, 166–72.

[36] See, Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp, "Marianische Landespatrone in Europa unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Ungarns," *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 25, (2002): 77–102.

[37] See, for example: „Hinc Thurcicae gentis ferox crudelitas / Nos Pannones, o, dirutos / Et viribus fractos nimis iam pristinis / Exterminat propter ducum / Et principum discordiam Christi fidem / Sanctissimam colentium;" Nicolaus Olahus, "In praesens seculum," in *Carmina*, ed. Iosephus Fógel, Ladislaus Juhász (Leipzig: Teubner, 1934), 40–41. Antal Verancsics, "Ad Hungaros," in Antal Verancsics, *Összes munkái*, ed. László Szalay, Gusztáv Wenzel (Budapest: MTA, 1875), vol. 12: 14.

[38] Horváth, *A török veszedelem*, 54–63. Imre, *"Magyarország panasza"*, 154.

[39] On the competition between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, which represented a struggle not just between two great powers, but also two civilisations which defined each other, see Gábor Ágoston, "Ideológia, propaganda és politikai pragmatizmus: A Habsburg–Oszmán nagyhatalmi vetélkedés és a közép-európai konfrontáció," *Történelmi Szemle* 45, no. 1–2 (2003): 1–24.

dynastic aims of the Hapsburgs.[40] In 1575, in another political context, the Hungarian mission was once again brought up when arguments were made in support of István Báthory's attempt to become king of Poland. Giorgio Biandrata, in his oration, not only referred to the defence of Christendom as the common task of the two peoples, but also used the same arguments to defend Báthory from accusations which claimed he was a friend of the Ottomans.[41]

In the 16th century, after the more important triumphs and the battles which demonstrated Hungarian heroism, the belief flared up again that Hungary could take on the role of the shield for the Christian countries to the West. Both Eger and Szigetvár were awarded the title of defensive bastion. The self-sacrifice of Miklós Zrínyi, the defender of Szigetvár, was celebrated throughout Europe as a heroic deed in the defence of Christendom.[42] In 1587 an album was published in his honour, in which he was presented as the defender of Christianity. Zrínyi's elevation to a Christian hero also continued in the following century and the epic *Szigeti veszedelem* (The Siege of Sziget) is a literary example of this (published: Vienna, 1651), written by his great-grandson of the same name; it appeared in graphic form as a painting entitled *Zrínyi Miklós apoteózisa* (The Apotheosis of Miklós Zrínyi, late 16th cent.).[43] Besides the information they provided, the textual and visual illustrations of the siege of Szigetvár and its hero also served to motivate support for the struggle against the Ottomans.

The 17th-century Hapsburg representations increasingly reflected the intention that the dynasty – excluding the Hungarians and acting against them – identified itself in the role of defensive bastion of Christendom. A good example of this is the propaganda which appeared at the time of the anti-Hapsburg revolt (1604-06) of István Bocskai, Prince of Transylvania (1605-06), which not only removed the Hungarians from that role, but also set them up as enemies of Christianity (*hostis Christianitatis*). At the same time in the political argumentation of the Hungarians we can find references to the role of defensive bastion which they felt was their own: Bocskai, in a publication issued in 1605, accused Rudolf (i.e. Rudolf II, Holy Roman Empire 1576-1608), the King of Hungary, that it was he who had brought ruin to Hungary, which had been the defensive bastion of Christendom

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[40] Attila Bárány, "Queen Maria, the Cult of Louis II and Hungary in the Low Countries," in *Történetek a mélyföldről: Magyarország és Németalföld kapcsolata a kora újkorban*, ed. Réka Bozzay (Debrecen: Printart-Press, 2014), 362–97.

[41] Hopp, *Az "antemurale" és "conformitas"*, 137.

42 On Eger, see, for example, the preface by János Rimay, written for an epicedium composed for Bálint Balassi's death in Tibor Klaniczay, ed., *Janus Pannonius, Magyarországi humanisták* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1982), 831. On Szigetvár: Tibor Klaniczay, *Zrínyi Miklós* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964), 130–38.

43 On this picture, see Galavics, *Kössünk kardot*, 24, the author provides an illustration of the painting at the end of the volume: colur plate no. 3.

for centuries.[44] Elsewhere, however, Bocskai, speaking for Transylvania, declared that it was "the strongest shield of our nation's survival, – and from it the whole nation can expect to survive eternally".[45] Two tendencies are revealed simultaneously in this declaration: 1) that in this period the Hungarians felt their primary task was to defend their own people and not Christendom;[46] 2) by this time the sense of unity between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania had largely disappeared, but a united Hungarian nation had remained.[47]

In the second half of the 17th century, the military successes of the previously mentioned Miklós Zrínyi re-awakened the belief that the Ottomans could be expelled from Hungary. His victories had a great impact on both Hungarian and European public opinion.[48] During his life he already represented the figure of the defender of Christendom, and the texts that appeared after his death mentioned him in this context. It was he who rose above sectarianism to occupy himself with the fate of Hungary,[49] and he both announced and embodied the concept of the *athleta Christi* of the Baroque Age.[50] Perhaps it was thanks to his heroic commitment that the idea of Hungary as the defensive bastion of Christendom was once again reinforced in Europe, and was so beautifully worked in a copperplate illustration by

44 „Nunc autem praeter omnem expectationem ille murus ahaeneus Christianorum, et quod satis deplorari non potest, hic non hostium machinis dirutus, non inimicorum vi dijectus et conquassatus est, sed ab eo, qui propugnator esse debuit et qui vindex ultorque esse putabatur, fere suffossus est et exitium passus est, a Rudolpho inquam, electo et jurato rege ipsorum". Bocskai's declarations are published in *Magyar országgyűlési emlékek*, ed. Árpád Károlyi (Budapest: MTA, 1899), vol. 11: 168–84, with the quoted passage appearing on p. 169.

45 Quoted by Benda, *A magyar nemzeti hivatástudat*, 81.

46 Ibid., 55.

47 Katalin Péter, "A haza és a nemzet az ország három részre hullott állapota idején," in Katalin Péter, *Papok és nemesek: Magyar művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a reformációval kezdődő másfél évszázadból* (Budapest: Ráday Gyűjtemény, 1995), 222–32.

48 Katalin Péter, "'Zrínyi Miklós angol rajongói'," in *Angol életrajz Zrínyi Miklósról*, ed. Sándor Iván Kovács (Budapest: Zrínyi, 1987), 27–63. Zsombor Tóth, "'Fun-Club' Zrínyi, 1664. (Megjegyzések a Zrínyi-kultuszhoz az angol nyelvű életrajz tükrében," in *Antropológia és irodalom: Egy új paradigma útkeresése*, ed. Gábor Biczó, Noémi Kiss (Debrecen: Csokonai, 2003), 211–24.

49 István Bitskey, "Il destino della nazione nei topoi della letteratura ungherese antica," in *Politica, religione e letteratura in Italia e in Ungheria (secc. XV–XVIII)*, ed. István Bitskey, Amedeo Di Francesco, Orsolya Száraz (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2013), 197–221.

50 István Bitskey, "Virtus és poézis (Önszemlélet és nemzettudat Zrínyi Miklós műveiben)," in István Bitskey, *Mars és Pallas között* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2006), 203–38. István Bitskey, "Pázmány Péter prédikációja Szent Mártonról," in *Historicus Societatis Iesu: Szilas László Emlékkönyv*, ed. Antal Molnár, Csaba Szilágyi, István Zombori (Budapest: METEM – Historia Ecclesiastica Hungarica Alapítvány, 2007), 235–44.

an unknown artist in the second half of the 17th century.[51]

At the end of the century, following Zrínyi's death, the dissatisfaction of the Hungarian nobility increased as it became ever clearer that the Hapsburgs had no intention of liberating Hungary. The situation was made worse by the fact that the Hapsburgs took aggressive measures against the Protestants. The disaffected found a leader in Imre Thököly, whose policy of an alliance with the Ottomans led to Hungary losing the role of defensive bastion, and instead winning the title of enemy of Christianity in Europe.[52] Thököly – through his ambassadors – rejected this view, and passed the responsibility for the fact that Christendom was once again open to a serious Ottoman threat onto the Hapsburgs. It is clear from his reasoning that the Hungarians' right to freedom came before Christian interests.[53]

The combined European effort against the Ottomans (The Holy League) managed to retake Buda from the Ottomans in 1686, an event celebrated by the whole of Christendom, and one which gave the Hapsburgs an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that it was they who were the real defenders of Christendom. Spreading of this idea they were first and foremost helped by the Jesuits.[54]

A change in the conception came about during the war for freedom (1703-1711) led by Ferenc Rákóczi II (Prince of Transylvania and Ruling Prince of Hungary, 1704-1711). Here it was not to rebuild the defensive bastion against the Ottomans that God's assistance was invoked, but to defend Hungarian freedom against the Germans.[55] In the diplomatic negotiations, however, in order to gain help from European monarchs, the defence of Christendom was still always referred to. Pál Ráday – who was sent by Rákóczi in 1704 to Charles XII and Frederick I – had to prove to the two rulers that "Hungary does not wish to accept Ottoman help, indeed her intention is to remain the defensive bastion

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51 Unknown artist, *Hungary, the Defensive Bastion of Christendom*, copperplate, second half of 17th century, Hungarian National Museum, in *A magyar kereszténység ezer éve: Hungariae Christianae Millennium*, ed. Pál Cséfalvay, Maria Antonietta De Angelis (Budapest: Magyar Katolikus Püspöki Konferencia, 2001), 344.

52 See Béla Köpeczi,*"Magyarország a kereszténység ellensége": A Thököly-felkelés az európai közvéleményben* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1976).

53 Ibid., 51–52.

54 On the Jesuits' celebration in Trencsén (Trenčín, present-day Slovakia), see Galavics, *Kössünk kardot*, 119. On the above-mentioned role of the Jesuits, see: Maria Goloubeva, *The Glorification of Emperor Leopold I in Image, Spectacle and Text* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000), passim.

55 See, for example, Ferenc Rákóczi's song: "Épits föl, Úristen, megromlott oszlopát / Szegény magyaroknak megromlott bástyáját! // Isteni erőddel add meg szabadságát, / Emeld föl még egyszer tündöklő zászlóját!" "Lord God, build up the ruined column / The poor Hungarians' ruined bastion! // God with your strength give freedom / Raise up once more your splendid flag!" Imre Varga, ed., *A kuruc küzdelmek költészete: II. Rákóczi Ferenc születésének 300. évfordulójára* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1977), 467.

of Christendom against the Ottoman Empire".[56]

From the end of the 17th century, and more frequently in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was stated, mainly by German authors, that because of Hungary's cultural backwardness, the Hungarians were unfit for the sciences and the arts. In their denials of this, the Hungarian authors were happy to refer to the centuries-old struggle against the Ottomans, which they believed had prevented Hungary achieving outstanding results in scientific and cultural fields. Evidence for this was, in their opinion, the fact that the country's last golden age of culture was under the rule of Matthias Hunyadi.[57]

At the end of the 18th century the conflict between the Germans and the Hungarians provides examples in which the idea of a defensive bastion is not linked in any way with Christianity: the Hungarians have been transformed into a bastion against the Germans.

The age of memory II: collective memory in the age of realms of memory

The 19th century saw the concept of the defensive bastion of Christendom take final form: of the content of the previous structure built on the religious opposition of the two groups only the bastion remained, and into this unchanged form any community could be substituted. So in 1802, when the ruler needed help from the Hungarians in the campaign against Napoleon, in the speech given to the Hungarian Parliament by the Hungarian king, Franz I (1792–1835, who ruled as Holy Roman Emperor under the name of Franz II from 1792–1806) Hungary was described as the defensive bastion of the Monarchy.[58]

At the time of the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence, and later in the next decades, the significance of the realm of memory was modified by the changing relationship between Hungary and other nations, and varied but similar constructions appeared. In 1848 the poet Sándor Petőfi in his poem (*Élet vagy halál! – Life or Death!*) reminds the nations of the Carpathian Basin in extreme, strongly nationalist and agitated tones, that for centuries the Hungarians had defended them against the Ottomans, and now they were showing their gratitude by attacking the same Hungarians under orders from the Austrian Emperor.[59] The poet also praised the previous sacrifices of the Hungarians in a newspaper article in which he emphasised Hungary's role, not as

[56] Kálmán Benda, ed., *Európa és a Rákóczi-szabadságharc* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1980), 62.
[57] Andor Tarnai, *Extra Hungariam non est vita... (Egy szállóige történetéhez)* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1969), 63–92.
[58] Quoted by Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 324.
[59] István Margócsy, *Petőfi Sándor* (Budapest: Korona, 1999), 195–96.

a defender of Christianity, but of European civilization.[60]

The history of the defensive bastion, which stretches back several centuries was – following the defeat of the War of Independence – exemplified for the writer Mór Jókai, by the fact that neither then, nor earlier, could Hungary count on the support of neighbouring or more distant European peoples.[61] One of the leaders of the War of Independence, Lajos Kossuth, however, brought a new ingredient to the concept. In the speeches made during his tour of North America and Britain he used the idea of bastion of Christendom to renew the national-historical mission of the Hungarian people and orientate it to the power relations of the age. In this way, Hungary became the protective dam against the advance and pressure exerted by Russia.[62] Kossuth referred to the Russians as the enemies of civilization, to give more conviction to his speeches, the aim of which was really to gather political and military support for the Hungarian cause.

The enemy which at that period Hungary took on itself to confront in order to defend Europe was not the Ottomans, but the Russians. Following the War of Independence of Ferenc Rákóczi II, a process of acceptance of the Turks began, and subsequently the hostile relationship was transformed into a friendly one following

[60] "...ha te nem mártírkodtál volna, magyar nemzet, most a török félhold vetne kísérteties fényt az európai műveltség romjaira." "…if you hadn't martyred yourself, Hungarian nation, now the Turkish crescent would shine its tempting light over the ruins of European culture." An article of Sándor Petőfi in a contemporary newspaper *Márczius Tizenötödike*, 17th Sept. 1848, no. 160, quoted by Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 318.

[61] „Midőn minden szomszédnak, románnak, szerbnek, németnek kezet kellett volna fogni a magyarral, hogy egy közös hatalmas ellenségtől megóvják a keresztyén világot, éppen akkor törtek legjobban mind ellene, s midőn minden magyar szívnek egyet kellett volna érteni abban, hogy vezérét örök ellensége ellen kövesse, mikor volt is ilyen vezér, akit kövessen, Hunyady János, éppen akkor húzott, ahány, annyi felé." "When all neighbours, Romanians, Serbs, Germans, should have held hands with Hungarians, so that they could defend the Christian world against a vast, common enemy, just at that time all broke against each other, and when all Hungarian hearts should have understood that they should follow their leaders against their eternal enemy, when was there a leader to follow, John Hunyady, it was just then that they all pulled, each in their own different direction." Mór Jókai, *A magyar nemzet története regényes rajzokban*, ed. Tivadar Téglás, Ferenc Végh (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1969), vol. 1: 251.

[62] "Magyarország az isteni Gondviselés által arra van hivatva, hogy az egész európai földrész számára újra a civilizáció és a vallásszabadság elővédje legyen az orosz deszpotizmus rombolásai ellenében, mint ahogy egykor a kereszténység védőgátja volt az Izlám ellenében." "Hungary is called to bear God's burden, to once again be the defence of civilisation and religious freedom for the whole of Europe against the destructive advance of Russian despotism, just as it once was the defensive gate of Christendom against Islam." The speech of Kossuth quoted by Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 328–29.

the 1848-49 War of Independence and the Crimean War.[63] This is indicated by the fact that beginning with the 1870s, and becoming more intensive in the 1880s, in the debate about the linguistic family relationships of the Hungarian language – the so-called "Ugric-Turkic (language) war" – Hungarian public opinion favoured a relationship with the Turkic rather than with the Finno-Ugric languages.[64]

As a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, the bases of the memories linked to the concept of Hungary as a defensive bastion of Christendom changed. The family feeling on the part of the Hungarian people towards the Turks and the opposition to the Russians who had assisted in the defeat of the War of Independence in 1849 gave a new sense to the struggles against the Ottomans of the 15th to 17th centuries.[65] The poem *Zenta–Mohács* by Mór Jókai shows this clearly; the poet forgave the Turks for the defeats they had inflicted at Mohács (1526) and suffered at Zenta (1697) because of the heroism they had shown against the Russians.[66] In the poem the conflict between the Hungarians and the Turks is no longer mentioned in the context of Hungary's defensive role against the Ottomans, but as glorious and heroic events in the common memories of the two peoples. By this time, nothing, not even the religious difference, placed the two nations in opposing positions, and friendship with the Turks was no longer a shameful episode. So, what had previously appeared an unbridgeable opposition based on a religious difference between the two great civilizations, disappeared. This change can be felt in this period not only in texts, but also on the ritual level: in 1877 and 1878 the residents of Zenta did not hold their services to commemorate the day of the battle, in order to show their sympathetic feelings for the Turks.[67]

However, it was not just the transformation of the image of the Turks among Hungarian people which lay behind the fact that the opposition between Christianity and Islam was not overly emphasised in the concept of the defensive bastion. In the peace and subsequent congress following the Russo-Turkish War, the Ottoman Empire lost the major part of its Balkan territories, and so the frontier between the two civilizations – to the damage of Islam – moved significantly to the South-East. Given this kind of transformation in power relations, the Christian–

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[63] Pál Fodor, "Törökök magyar szemmel," *Magyar Tudomány*, April 2011, accessed 2 November, 2020, http://www.matud.iif.hu/2011/04/03.htm.

[64] János Pusztay, *Az "ugor–török háború" után* (Budapest: Magvető, 1977), 92–107.

[65] See, for example, issues of the *Vasárnapi Ujság* (*The Sunday News*) and the *Kelet Népe* (*The Eastern People*), political dailies from 1877-78.

[66] On Mohács as a special realm of memory for the Hungarian people see the studies in *A magyar emlékezethelyek kutatásának elméleti és módszertani alapjai*, ed. Pál S. Varga, Orsolya Száraz, Miklós Takács (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2013), 199–402.

[67]Attila Pejin, "Lokális és/vagy nemzeti? Történelmi tudathasadásaink és emlékezetkieséseink," in *Bennünk élő múltjaink: Történelmi tudat – kulturális emlékezet*, ed. Richárd Papp, László Szarka (Zenta: Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet, 2008), 126.

Muslim opposition lost much of its significance and contemporary relevance.

In the 1920s the concept of the defensive bastion was re-invigorated with a new level of political significance. Hungary's past struggles to defend Christendom were linked with its contemporary role in opposing Bolshevism.[68] In the Paris Peace Conference of 1920, Albert Apponyi expressed his opposition to the division of Hungary by arguing that the country could only fulfil its mission to defend Europe if it remained territorially intact,[69] and elsewhere he made it clear that Hungary's contemporary task was the defence against the "Russian danger".[70] Apponyi

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[68] See, Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 332.

[69] "Ez a terület, amely Magyarországot alkotja és amely jogilag ma is Magyarország, századokon át rendkívül fontos szerepet játszott Európában, különösen Középeurópában a béke és a biztonság fentartása [sic!] tekintetében. A magyar honfeladást és a magyaroknak a keresztény hitre való áttérését megelőző évszázadokban hiányzott itt a nyugalom és a biztonság. Középeurópa a legkülönbözőbb barbár népek támadásainak volt kitéve. A biztonság csak attól a pillanattól fogva áll fenn, amikor a magyar védővonal kialakult. [...] A történelmi Magyarország töltötte be azt a feladatot, hogy oly államot tartva fenn, amelyben egyensúly és biztonság uralkodott, megvédte Európát a Keletről fenyegető veszedelmek elől. Ezt a hivatását tíz századon át töltötte be és erre egyedül organikus egysége képesítette." "This territory, which forms Hungary and which is still administratively Hungary today, played an exceptionally important role in Europe for centuries, especially in central Europe in terms of maintaining peace and security. In the centuries preceding the settlement of the area by Hungarians and its conversion to Christianity, calm and security were lacking here. Central Europe was open to the attacks of all kinds of barbarian people. Security was only established with the creation of the Hungarian defensive wall. [...] Historical Hungary fulfilled the role of maintaining a state where balance and security ruled, and defended Europe from the dangers threatening from the East. The country faced this vocation for ten centuries and to achieve it became a unique organic unit." *Magyar Királyság Apponyi Albert gróf beszédeiben* (Budapest: Magyar Férfiak Szent Korona Szövetsége, 1933), 13–14 (A protest against the Treaty of Trianon, 26th January 1920).

[70] "Már a jogfejlődés és a szervezkedési elvek ezen sajátossága teljes önállóságra praedestinálta nemzetünket, mely önállóság nélkül nem rendezkedhetett volna be szabadon, saját helyzetének szükségletei szerint. De kívánta és kívánja ezt az önállóságot az a hivatás is, a melyet mint előretolt védelmi őrsége a nyugotnak [!] betölteni hivatva volt és ma is – bár nem egymagában – teljesíteni hivatott. [...] Végre a Habsburg-ház útján jött létre az az állandó kapcsolat nyugoti [!] országokkal, a mely túlélte a török veszedelmet és most egyik erősségünk az orosz veszedelemmel szemben." "Already development of the law and the principles of organisation had predestined our nation in this special way to complete independence, and without this independence it would not have been able to enjoy its freedom and organise its circumstances according to its own needs. But our nation's vocation also desired and still desires this independence, as the country was called and is called on today to fulfil – although not alone – the function of a guardian outpost for the West. [...] Finally, through the house of Hapsburg there came the permanent relationship with Western countries, which survived the Ottoman danger and is now one of our strengths against the threat from Russia." Albert

portrayed the opposition as one of a civilising nature, when primarily it revolved around Hungary's political interests.

After the Treaty of Trianon, the attempts to win back the territories lost, however, were linked to the nation's role of defensive bastion in an entirely different way. A permanent point of reference in the argumentations was that Hungary was a defensive bastion of the West, while the West, instead of gratitude and thanks, had repaid the country by abandoning it and cutting it into pieces.[71] After the First World War there was a revival of Turanism, which advertised its orientation towards the East and its opposition to the West. The ideology directed to the East emphasised Hungary's links with Asia, which contradicted the idea of the defensive bastion of Christendom, and so left it in silence or interpreted it in a different way. In 1936, when the preparations were being made for the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the retaking of Buda, Miklós Kozma, chairman of the Hungarian Telegraph Office asked Gyula Gömbös, the Prime Minister, "let it not appear from the event that the 'cross' defeated the 'crescent', because that would only emphasise the positive role of the West. And today we in fact ought to be asking 'whether it was really such a good thing to sacrifice the Hungarian people to the West in perpetuity, when they paid us back like this'. What should come out of it is that 'the Hungarian people sacrificed themselves for the West and they had justified reason to regret it later'.[72]"

In the context of friendship with the Turks, the historian Gyula Szekfű also entered the debate against the Turanists, who wished to rewrite the past, arguing against their alternative commemoration. He re-emphasised the concept of the defensive bastion of Christendom in the political and academic debate and used it to show that Hungary always belongs to the West, and an Eastern orientation had always been a failed national strategy.[73]

In the 1930s, following Hitler's seizure of power, Hungary appeared with increasing frequency as a bastion against the German advance.[74] In the World Eucharistic Congress held in Budapest in 1938, although initially it was devoted to an anti-communist platform, at the end – given the deteriorating relations between the Catholic Church and Hitler's Germany – it took on an attitude hostile to Nazi

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Apponyi, *A magyar nemzet természetszerű elhelyezkedése a világpolitikában* (Budapest: Franklin-Társulat, 1915), 15–16.

[71] Elemér Hankiss, "Nemzetvallás," in *Monumentumok az első háborúból*, ed. Ákos Kovács (Budapest: Corvina, 1991), 64–90. Miklós Zeidler, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002).

[72] Ferenc Glatz, *Nemzeti kultúra, kulturált nemzet, 1867–1987* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1988), 196.

[73] Sándor Őze, "Szekfű Gyula törökkoros munkássága," in *Szekfű Gyula és nemzedéke a magyar történetírásban*, ed. Rudolf Paksa (Budapest: Argumentum – Eötvös József Collegium, 2007), 91–127.

[74] Terbe, "Egy európai szállóige," 325.

Germany.[75] The organisers in this situation once more assigned to Hungary the role of the defensive bastion of Christendom, this time "against neo-pagan Bolshevism and the Nazi infection.[76]" From the same period we can also cite the writer László Németh, who in one of his essays defined Hungary's role against Russian communism and emphasised the country's permanent membership of the West.[77]

In the 1940s, to justify the war against the Soviet Union, the government frequently used the concept of defensive bastion in the sense of Hungary being a defensive bastion of the West against the barbarism of the East. At the same time, however, there was also an understanding of the defensive bastion of Christendom which emphasised the fact that Hungarians had always followed their own path, and neither in the past nor in the present had served other nations' attempts to gain political power.[78]

The writer Gyula Illyés analysed Hungary's historical calling by arguing that its fulfilment was always in the interest of other nations, but on Hungary's part was always undertaken in a sense of self-sacrifice without ulterior motives. For this reason, he suggested that the defence of Christendom from now on be God's task, while the Hungarians should defend their own nation. This latter point was not a reference to territorial or political defence against the outside world, but to the kind of measures which would resolve society's internal problems.[79]

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[75] Jenő Gergely, *Eucharisztikus világkongresszus Budapesten, 1938* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1988).

[76] Jenő Gergely, *A katolikus egyház története Magyarországon, 1919–1945* (Budapest: ELTE Újkori Magyar Történeti Tanszék, 1997), 30.

[77] "Magyarország a Nyugathoz tartozik, s végvára volt nemcsak a török, de az egész bizánci öv ellen, amióta áll. Legnagyobb büszkeségünk, hogy a sivatagterjesztő török kultúrájú népek közül egyedül mi lehettünk a Nyugat alkotó kedvének az egész második millenniumban részesei." "Hungary belongs to the West, and since its inception has been a final defence, not just against the Turks, but also against the whole Byzantine zone. Our greatest pride is that from among the Turkic cultured people that spread across the desert, we are the only ones to be a part of the enthusiasm to create the West over the whole of the second millennium." László Németh, "Nyugat és Bizánc," in *A magyar esszé antológiája*, ed. Mátyás Domokos (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), vol. 1: 889.

78 In 1943, for example, this was the opinion of the Parliamentary representative Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky. See, Károly Vigh, *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre külpolitikai nézeteinek alakulása* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1979), 145.

[79] "Én beérném, ha a kereszténység helyett, melyet isten sugallt és teremtett, s így nyilván adott esetben meg is tud védeni, a nemzet a védtelenek, az özvegyek, árvák, a munkások és nincstelenek védelmére adná magát, s ha nagyra akar nézni, hát a kereszténység elveinek védelmére. Közép-európai hivatásunkat is tehát abban látom, hogy gyorsan, minden mellékgondolat nélkül valósítsuk meg magunk számára mindazt, ami nemcsak egy népet, de több népet is boldoggá és szabaddá tehet: a rengeteg ígéretet." "I would settle for a situation in which, instead of Christianity, which God inspired and created, and which obviously in a given case he could also defend, the nation would give itself for the defence of the

In the Communist period, in the time of Rákosi, the Soviet Union was "the most powerful bastion of democracy.[80]" However, after Tito decided to follow a separate path in Yugoslavia, Mátyás Rákosi sounded the slogan "Hungary is not a crack, but a strong bastion in the frontline of peace". This was intended to express the idea that Hungary – unlike Yugoslavia – remained faithful to Stalin and the Soviet Union. This slogan later became an oft-repeated element in Rákosi's speeches.[81]

In 1948 Rákosi outlined the goal of "the ordering of the relationship

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defenceless, the widows, the orphans, the workers and the dispossessed, and if it wanted to look for a greater task, then in defence of Christian principles. Our vocation in Central Europe, therefore, as I see it, is that quickly, and without any second thoughts, we should make a reality for ourselves all those things which have made not just one people, but several peoples happier and freer: as it was promised so many times." Gyula Illyés, *Magyarok: Naplójegyzetek* (Budapest: Nyugat, 1938), vol. 2: 297.

[80] "Ezen belül mindenütt támogatják a reakciót, mindenütt szítják a háborús hangulatot, és mindenütt uszítanak a demokrácia leghatalmasabb védőbástyája, a nagy Szovjetunió ellen. Ha a második világháború idejében esztendőkön keresztül a Szovjetunió népeinek vállára nehezedett a fasizmus elleni harc oroszlánrésze és a haladó emberiség a Vörös Hadsereg hőseitől remélte és joggal remélte a fasizmus megsemmisülését, úgy most az imperialista világuralmi törekvésekkel szemben megint a Szovjetunió az a bástya, amelyen megtörik a reakció minden hulláma." "And there, they support the reaction everywhere, everywhere they stir up a warlike atmosphere, and everywhere they foment ill-feeling against the greatest defensive bastion of democracy, the great Soviet Union. If, during the Second World War for years the shoulders of the peoples of the Soviet Union were weighed down by the lion's share of the struggle against fascism, and progressive humanity hoped, and justifiably hoped, that the heroes of the Red Army would destroy fascism, then now, faced with the attempts of the imperialist world, it is once again the Soviet Union which is the bastion against which every wave of reaction will break." Rákosi's speech to the great assembly of party activists in Budapest, 31st October 1947. Mátyás Rákosi, *A fordulat éve* (Budapest: Szikra, 1950), http://mek.oszk.hu/04400/04493/04493.htm#16.

[81] "A folyó évi május 15-i parlamenti választásokon is a béke kérdése volt a döntő kérdés. Akkor adtuk ki azt a jelszót: »Magyarország nem rés, hanem erős bástya a béke frontján.«" "In the parliamentary elections on 15th May of the current year, the question of peace was also the decisive question. It was then that we issued the key slogan 'Hungary is not a crack, but a strong bastion on the peace front.'" Mátyás RÁKOSI, *Magyarország a békefront erős bástyája* (*Hungary is the strong bastion of the peace front*) (December 1949), in R. M., *A békéért és a szocializmus építéséért* (*For Peace and the Building of Socialism*), Bp., Szikra, 1951, http://mek.oszk.hu/04300/04351/04351.htm (Downloaded: 12.07.2020). "A mi feladatunk, a magyar demokrácia feladata, hogy a maga szakaszán biztosan és megingathatatlanul álljon, hogy az ellenség megértse, hogy a mi országunk nem rés a béke frontján, hanem erős bástya." "Our task, the task of Hungarian democracy, is to stand securely and unwaveringly in our section, so that the enemy understands that our country is not a crack in the peace front, but a strong bastion." Report to the National Congress of the Hungarian Independent People's Front, 15th March 1949, Mátyás Rákosi, *Építjük a nép országát* (Budapest: Szikra, 1949), http://mek.oszk.hu/04600/04670/04670.htm.

between the church and the people's republic.[82]" Subsequent to this, the Church became the subject of continuous attacks, and the decades of communist repression began. The Hungarian Catholic Church in this situation seemed to be the defensive bastion of Christianity against communism. Pius XII, in his speech given in the secret consistorium on 14th February 1949, placed emphasis on the continuity of the Hungarian people's actions in defence of Christendom – since the days of St Stephen –, and expressed the hope that Hungarian Catholics would bear the latest trials with steadfast faith and perseverance.[83]

When the participants of the 1956 Uprising turned to help from the West, they once again emphasised Hungary's former role in defending Christendom.[84] József Mindszenty, Hungary's archbishop, in his radio address of November 3rd, stressed that Hungary had always had to defend itself and the West, which had brought negative consequences for the nation: "But we had to fight a continuous

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[82] Gábor Salacz, *A magyar katolikus egyház tizenhét esztendeje (1948–1964)* (München: Görres Gesellschaft, 1988), 9.

[83] Ibid., 184: "E szorongató helyzet közepette azonban, Tisztelendő Testvérek, nem nélkülöztük az irgalmasság Atyjának (vö. Kor. 1:3) mennyei vigasztalását, s ez enyhítette fájdalmunkat. Ennek egyik forrása a magyar katolikusok szilárd hite, akik a legviszontagságosabb helyzetükben is megtesznek minden lehetőt ősi vallásuk védelmére és megújítják elődeik hajdani kemény kitartását; továbbá az a szilárd, atyai lelkünkben melengetett bizalmunk, hogy Magyarország püspökei mindenkor tökéletes egyetértéssel és ügybuzgalommal törekszenek majd megvédeni az egyház szabadságát, teljes erővel megszilárdítani a keresztények egységét, és fönntartani bennük azt a reményt, amelyet, mivel az égből származik és isteni kegyelem táplálja, ez életnek sem sanyarúságai, sem igazságtalanságai nem képesek kioltani vagy meggyöngíteni." "In the midst of this difficult situation, however, Honourable Brothers, we are not without the heavenly comfort of the merciful Father (cf. Cor. 1:3), and this soothes our pain. One source of this is the solid faith of Hungarian Catholics, who even in the most trying circumstances do everything in their power to defend their ancient faith and renew their predecessors' previous firm perserverance; furthermore, it is our strong trust, warmed in our fatherly soul, that Hungary's bishops will always, with complete agreement and enthusiasm for the cause, attempt to defend the freedom of the Church, to strengthen Christian unity with all their might, and to sustain within us the hope that, since it derives from Heaven and is nourished by the grace of God, cannot be destroyed or weakened through repression and injustice of this life."

[84] One radio station called for military intervention from the West in the following way: "Kérünk minden nyugatnémet adót, amely adásunkat fogni tudja, adja tovább angol, német, francia nyelven. Segítséget kérünk! Magyarország mindig a Nyugat védőbástyája volt. A helyzet óráról órára súlyosabb. Csak katonai segítség menthet meg bennünket!" "We ask all West German programmes which can receive our broadcasts, to pass them on in English, German and French. We ask for help! Hungary was always the defensive bastion of the West. The situation is worsening from hour to hour. Only military help can save us!" László Varga, ed., *A forradalom hangja: Magyarországi rádióadások, 1956. október 23–november 9.* (Budapest: Századvég – Nyilvánosság Klub, 1989), 496.

war for freedom. Mostly to defend Western countries. This hindered the country, and we always had to find our resurrection from within our own strength.[85]" In later references to the past the image of the defensive bastion also appeared. The writer Béla Varga, who had emigrated to the United States in 1947, declared in an interview made before he finally returned to Hungary (1991): "We're going home to my own dear Budapest. [...] In 1945, just as in 1956, Budapest was the defensive bastion of Hungary and Europe; at times of historical trials, she also struggled hopelessly against tyranny.[86]"

In the second half of the 20th century, the bastion of Christendom as a realm of memory in the European memory tended to fall into oblivion. The forgetfulness of the West was recognised, for instance, by a writer, Tibor Déry during his visit in Cannes Film Festival, however, he also indicated that Hungarians insist on remembering their past.[87]

For Hungarians the concept of the defensive bastion is still alive today. Referring to this, certain politicians even in the 1990s expected thanks and help from the West.[88] According to a Gallup survey, in 1993 – regardless of age,

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[85] Ibid., 461.

[86] István Csicsery-Rónay, "'A magyar nép büszkesége embersége legyen'," in *A demokrácia fellegvárának építői*, ed. Bálint Török (Budapest: Századvég, 2002), 242.

[87] "– Magyarország? – ismételték tűnődve. – Ázsia? – Onnét jöttünk – mondtam –, több mint ezer éve. De tudniuk illene, hogy hosszú évszázadokig mi voltunk az önök védőbástyája a török ellen. Ha mi nem vagyunk, Brigitte Bardot ma egy Champs-Elysées-i háremben sínylődne, mélyen lefátyolozva. – Köszönjük – mondták." "– Hungary? – they repeated wonderingly. – Asia? – That's where we came from – I said –, more than a thousand years ago. But you really ought to know that for long centuries we were your defensive bastion against the Turks. If we hadn't been there, Brigitte Bardot would today be languishing in a harem on the Champs-Elysées, heavily veiled. – We thank you – they said." Tibor Déry, "Hordalék Cannes-ból", in Tibor Déry, *A napok hordaléka*, ed. Pál Réz (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1982), 136.

[88] See, for example, the speech made by Béla Moldován (spokesman for the Transylvanian Christian Democratic party) at a conference in 1992: „Mit csinál Nyugat? teszem fel a kérdést. Hogyan hálálja meg azt, hogy Magyarország mindig a Nyugat védőbástyája volt, bástyája a tatár, bástyája a török, bástyája a kommunizmus ellen. Elfelejtette azt: ha nincs 56, ha nem vérzik a magyar ifjúság, ha nem vérzik a magyar munkásság, akkor nem lehetne beszélni Poznanról, Walesáról sem, és nem lehetne beszélni a kommunizmus eltűnéséről sem. Nem könyörögni, és nem koldulni akarunk a Nyugattól, de azt joggal várjuk el, hogy azt az országot, azt a népet, amely annyit szenvedett, és amely megvédte őt nagyon sok keserűségtől és nyomorúságtól, legalább elismerésre méltassa." "What is the West doing? I put the question. How do they show their gratitude for the fact that Hungary was always the defensive bastion of the West, a bastion against the Mongols, a bastion against the Turks, and a bastion against communism? They forget that if there had been no '56, if Hungarian youth had not bled, if Hungarian workers had not bled, then we could not speak of Poznań or Walesa, nor of the disappearance of communism. We do not wish to plead to the West, or beg from them, but we rightly expect that they should at least recognise with dignity the country and the people

educational background or place of residence – two thirds of the population, and in 2000, 71%, agreed with the statement that "Hungary was the defensive bastion of the West for a thousand years, and never in the past (nor in the present) did they thank us for this.[89]"

Translated from Hungarian by George Seel.

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who suffered so much and who defended them through so much bitterness and misery." Rezső Kiss, ed., *Hódoltságban, I. magyar történelmi konferencia az elnyomatás évtizedeiről* (Budapest: Zrínyi, 1992), 25.

[89]http://archive-hu-2012.com/hu/g/2012-09-27_322399_31/Gallup-P%C3%A1rtpreferenci%C3%A1k-2000-november-eleje/
(Downloaded: 01.03.2015) Unfortunately, the results of the survey are no longer available on the internet.