

## PHD THESES

Lajos Fülep in the revolutions of 1918-1919

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### 1. The aim and subject of my dissertation

My dissertation deals with three years of the life and activity of Lajos Fülep namely the years 1918–1920. These three years are in fact only two because the actual date we join in is 31<sup>st</sup> October the date of the outbreak of the so called őszirózsás revolution. My aim was to examine this period from as many points of view as possible. The special literature touched upon the 1918–1919 activity of Lajos Fülep only in passing. It is only his first diplomatic commission of December 1918– March 1919 in Fiume and Rome that is mentioned in the works of some historians (L. Nagy Zsuzsa, Ormos Mária, Romsics Ignác). In my paper I examined this diplomatic commission from the point of view of Fülep but not losing sight of either the Hungarian or the international political events and situations. As for Füleps' role in the Hungarian Soviet Republic the situation is even worse as this topic has so far proved to be absolutely unexplored. The only fact recorded by special literature was that in 1919 Fülep was appointed to a professorship and he was on the Writers Committee. In my paper I endeavoured to change this unfavourable situation. So far nothing but only fact has been recorded about the months after the Hungarian Soviet Republic as well. Facts, stating the he offered shelter to communists and that in December 1919 he entered diplomatic service. However these facts have not been interpreted and have not been contrasted with historical events.

The year 1919 was a mile stone not only life of Hungary but also in Fülep's private life. That was the time that he divorced and remarried. Nobody has ever examined these two important events. It was not my intention to open up old wounds in his private life, which would not follow the spirit of Fülep at all, but I checked what the truth was in Fülep's statement that he needed two communisms to be able to divorce. (Naturally I did not deal with his second divorce of 1945.)

My intention was to shed light also on the mystery how the diplomat of Mihály Károlyi, the university professor of the Soviet Republic and the member of various literary associations founded by communists could be a diplomat of the anticommunist Hungary.

## 2. The method of my thesis.

During nearly half a century, between 1945–1990, it was absolutely forbidden to do any research concerning of years 1918–1919 free from ideological preconceptions. Consequently a considerable part of books and articles written at that time have become outdated and can only be used with due care. My target was to have as little of the ideological trash of the 45 years as possible so I wanted to make sure of everything and work from original archival sources, manuscripts and contemporary newspapers. I did research work in the National Archives, in the Archives of Baranya county, in the Ráday Collection, in the Department of Manuscripts of the National Széchényi Library and of course in the Department of Manuscripts of the Library of Hungarian Academy of Sciences where the original manuscripts of Fülep can be found. So I adopted the method of source-criticism and study of sources. I extended my source-criticism to the statements of Fülep's chroniclers and to those of Fülep himself. It was often after many decades that Fülep recalled an event to his students and it was inevitable that in some cases his memory failed him. For example Fülep's statement that at the beginning of August 1919 Dezső Szabó used violence with his own commando at the university has become rather doubtful. Fülep often contradicted even himself so I had to confront his statements not only with historical facts but his own statements, too. It was not Fülep intentions to falsify or conceal facts and even less to place himself in a more favourable light but depending on the situation he emphasised highlighted different things. I was even more careful with the records of his followers and acquaintances. I could use András Fodor's diary surprisingly well but for example I was forced to contradict István Gál's facts one after the other.

My working method was basically determined by the state of Fülep research. Owing to Dóra Csanak's and Árpád Timár's self sacrificing work most part of Fülep's works and correspondence has become accessible also in print.

The correspondence has been published up to 1950. The situation is less favourable in the case of Fülep technical literature. Though the Fülep bibliography consists of numerous items the majority of these are of publicistic type and they hardly contain any new research findings. All they normally do is to repeat the findings of some pioneer articles. Several parts of his course of life, several pieces of his oeuvre have not been examined scientifically at all.

As I have mentioned this is especially true in the case of the three years analysed in my dissertation as not a single special article has been published about this period so far.

János Pilinszky is said to have become a classic of Hungarian literature with the shortest life-work. Considering the size of his oeuvre, Fülep in the Hungarian science is like Pilinszky in the Hungarian literature. His disciple art historian Lajos Németh aptly mentioned Socrates in connection with him, as he also diffused his ideas in peripatetic discussions rather than in writing. During the two years we examined he published merely six articles and only one of them, the review about Dezső Szabó's *Az elsodort falu* (The village whirled away) is of longer size. Consequently I could not write a thesis focusing purely on the works as there were no works. In spite of the hardly rich scientific harvest these three years are extremely interesting and full of content since it is maybe the most eventful period of Fülep's life.

He had two diplomatic commissions, he filled in several positions in the Soviet Republic, he was appointed university professor, he divorced and married again. It was on the basis of these few given facts that I tried to reconstruct the determining part of his path of life. I used an inductive method all the way through. I did not look for evidence for my ready-made concepts but I tried to understand Fülep's oeuvre starting from the facts. The first thing I had to do of course was to collect the facts. That is why the philological method necessarily dominates in my paper. As we have seen earlier, data and facts about Fülep's life could not be gathered solely from his own works and correspondence written at this time. It was necessary to search through the works of contemporaries, colleagues, friends and witnesses in the hope of finding useful data. Whatever I found I put in the context of the era and of the whole of Fülep's oeuvre. This way, from these three years I had a good view of the era and of the whole oeuvre as well.

Having put events in the context of the era, I often used the method of contrast. I wanted to know to what extent Fülep went his own way and to what extent he yielded to the public spirit.

Fülep was a many-sided man. He was a journalist, a university professor, a protestant pastor, he dealt with literary criticism, philosophy, art philosophy, art history, theology, and ethnography. Consequently his life-work can really be understood only having some knowledge of these branches of science. I am of course not at home in all these branches but in my paper, beyond my actual field of research which is literary history and literary poetics, I also had an outlook on the field of history, cultural history and church history.

It was my method and intention to consider every minute detail. So I took the opinion of Fülep's friends as well as that of his enemies seriously at first even if it unbelievable already at the first sight. It was only after thorough examination that I declared it true or false. I took even the smallest slip of paper into consideration. For example all that helped me to draw conclusions about the political views concerning 1919 of Fülep's second wife Zsuzsanna Gábor was a single addressed envelope and the letter writing practise and terminology of contemporaries as there were no other sources to help me.

It is true in several branches of science that there is hope of new findings whenever a contradiction occurs. It was an important methodological point of view for me, too. I looked for contradictions in the life-work and the course of life of Fülep and this way I managed to shed new light on various events.

I few words about the language of my paper. I consciously avoided the technical artificial language which appears to be scientific and is so popular today. It was partly because I am writing my thesis not only for experts but also for the wide reading public and partly because in this respect my creed is the same as that of Fülep's namely to write in Hungarian is not a question of style and stylistics but it is a question of ethics.

### 3. The content and results of the dissertation

In the autumn of 1918, having finished his theological studies Fülep was eagerly preparing for his mission to serve in the protestant church as a clergyman. He wanted to be an apostle of Christian revival which he thought was due to come soon so he intended to go to the country to the people. However historical events ruined his plans. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy lost the war, the different nationalities of the monarchy invaded a considerable part of Hungary and formed their independent national states. The dangerous external situation was worsened by an internal crisis which led into the so called 'Aster' revolution. Through his friends and acquaintances Fülep suddenly found himself in the centre of historical events. Alongside with the very best of the intellectuals Fülep belonged to the group sympathising

with Mihály Károlyi. So far it may have been considered accidental that on 27. October Fülep was also there at the Western railway station in the crowd greeting Károlyi who had come back from Vienna. However it was not by chance. I came across a statement in a contemporary newspaper where he also welcomed the formation of the National Council in the name of the Intellectual Scientific Free School. The fact that together with 95 intellectual colleagues Fülep signed the proclamation of 3. November called 'to the Hungarian intellectuals' is of more fundamental importance. This proclamation is hardly known in the historical special literature and is completely unknown in the Fülep special literature. We do not know how Fülep's name could be among the signers and it is not quite clear either who wrote the proclamation but it obviously reflects the ideas of Oszkár Jászi and those of the American President Wilson. The proclamation intended to reorganise the Monarchy on a confederal basis. Though Fülep was never averse to the idea of collaboration among the nations along the Danube it is surprising that he signed this proclamation. The Károlyi government, just as Oszkár Jászi and his followers earlier, started its operation in the spirit of pacifism, friendship with Antant and reconciliation of nationalities. Out of these three principles the illusory pacifism was very far from Fülep who wrote an excellent study about Machiavelli. The one-sided internationalism that shone through he proclamation was not characteristic of him either.

We had relatively much information about Fülep's diplomatic commission as his reports sent to Károlyi from Fiume are available. However research paid no attention to the fact that Fülep started his diplomatic commission when other politicians had already left the Károlyi government which was becoming more and more left wing. Fülep accepted to go because he was not lead by party interests. He was a nice exception among the diplomats also from an other aspect. He used very little money for his journey while others spent money recklessly and queued up for well paid jobs.

When in Rome, using his connections with his friends mainly those of G. Amendola, Fülep placed some articles in the Italian press which put Hungary in a favourable light but he was somewhat influenced by his partiality to the Italians. I proved that the Italian-Hungarian confederation which he wanted so much had no real chance as the only motive for the Italians was their selfish expansive and colonising interest and they also negotiated with our enemies behind our back.

Fülep kept his position in foreign affairs also during the Soviet Republic but just like many others had nothing to do and waited for its end. What we know for sure about his

political activity is that he met Béla Kun once and tried to convince him that land distribution was necessary.

He got a far bigger role in the literary world than in the political life and it was not restricted to the Writers Committee as we thought earlier. He was a member of the National Council of Intellectual Values, of the Writers Trade Union, of the Cadastral Committee that had 6 members and at the end of May, when many people like Babits or Móricz had already retired from public life, he was appointed even in the Writers Directory. Fülep was always appointed to his posts it was not his fellow writers that chose him. It was owing to his friend from the Sunday Circle György Lukács, later commissar of the Soviet Republic, that he got these promotions in his career. There were also talks about asking him to edit a literary journal but I was not able to clarify the exact circumstances.

It also became clear that Fülep never took an unfair advantage of his situation. As a member of the Writers Directory, he never put himself in the highest income category.

It was already the intention of the Károlyi government to appoint Fülep a university professor but it was realised only during the communist era. Fülep showed an exemplary behaviour in this question, too. Before his appointment he asked for the support of his church superiors and according to my research he was the only person who insisted being appointed with the invitation of the faculty, thus avoiding the violation of the university autonomy.

The communists did not care about it. Fülep did not yield to the spirit of the age even in the university position: as a professor of the communist system he lectured about Assisi Saint Francis .

When Fülep was older he often mentioned that during the Soviet Republic the regulation about divorce was changed because of him and that it was adjusted to his problem. This statement of his clearly proved to be a myth. Making divorce easier by law was a response to a public need.

It was a surprising finding though that on the day Fülep divorced he got married again to Zsuzsanna Gábor as if he were in a hurry. It was not only Zsuzsanna Gábor's femininity that attracted Fülep. During these years she was his intellectual companion as well and was active in different protestant organisations. Scientific research has not discovered so far that Zsuzsanna Gábor had some publications, too. I came across an article of hers about the great German mystic master Eckhardt, one of Fülep's favourite intellectuals.

It may seem strange that Fülep, a protestant pastor, took on positions in the anticlerical atheist Soviet Republic. It is easier to understand it however, if we know the historical situation of the time. It was a time when a strong chiliastic atmosphere could be felt in the

highest circles of the protestant church and they expected the communist system to create Christ's realm on the earth. Though Fülep also cherished some illusions he did not have ardent hopes like that.

In June Fülep retired from public life and returned to the capital only in August after the collapse of the Soviet Republic. He was immediately employed by the anticommunist 'white' Foreign Office. This was a case without parallel as the participants of the Commune were subject to strict political screening, many lost their jobs, and many were forced to emigrate. In case of Fülep not a single hair of his head was hurt. ( Apart from him it was only Ernő Osvát who got away with his positions during the Commune.) What can be the reason for this? The reason is not what Emma Ritoók, who is not on Fülep's side, suggests namely that he was a double agent. We have no evidence of this. It is an even greater mystery why the employee of the anticommunist Foreign office offered shelter in his flat to communists among others to the murderer László Szamuely, brother of Tibor Szamuely. Surely not out of political sympathy but out of Christian compassion.

I was the first to look into Emma Ritoók's diary which was not open to public and this way I was able to publish several facts unknown so far not only about the relation of Fülep and Emma Ritoók but also about the life of the Sunday Circle.

The fact that Fülep was not a deserter to the other side can best be proved by his review about Dezső Szabó's *Az elsodort falu* (The village whirled away). The article was written during the Commune but it was published only in December. In spite of the sudden basic changes in the historical situation Fülep did not change a single word in the text. He even added the word 'suicidal'. He withdrew all his words of appreciation about Dezső Szabó who was regarded the official writer of the new course. At that time it was a bold step!

Reception theory has been very fashionable nowadays. Still, very few papers have been created with real global reception history of individual works. This was what I accomplished in connection with Fülep's review on *Az elsodort falu* (The village whirled away). I processed all the available articles published in 1919-1920 in order to clarify in what way Fülep's article is different from the others, what original ideas it has in comparison with other articles. He was the only one who made a difference between the fiction in the novel and the reality and he was also the only one who ignored the changes in the historical circumstances and was only willing to deal with the aesthetic values of the novel not with the tragic historical situation.

Dezső Szabó's followers started a furious attack after Fülep's article but Fülep's statement that these attacks made him escape into diplomatic service to Rome for the second

time seems somewhat lacking. It was necessary because of his Italian connections. I managed to prove that the so called 'race-protectors' who had an important say in the foreign policy of the time thought in terms of Italian orientation just like Fülep and they also tried to keep Fiume. That was the reason why Fülep was sent to Rome not the attacks against him.

I found interesting traces of the possible connection of Fülep with the contemporary secret societies. However as documents are lacking these traces are rather just suppositions. The more so since Fülep held the Movement of the Hungarians Awakening in contempt.

Fülep's historical journey finished in 1920. He returned to his country and in the autumn he started his 25-year-long pastoral service in a tiny village in Tolna county. As a pastor, he also served the interests of the revolution, the big revolution of evangelising the souls.

It has become absolutely evident that during these years which were fatal from the point of view of Hungary's future Fülep was far more active than researchers thought. What's more, he was not only a witness of several events of historical importance but also an active creator. It has also been proved that during this period, just as all his life, Fülep went his own way without joining any of the ideological groups and preserving his autonomy of mind and of morale.

Owing to my study of sources I managed to discover some new findings not only in the Fülep special literature but also in other research areas. Dezső Szabó's special literature can benefit from the examined relationship of Fülep and Dezső Szabó. I found several articles which are not included in the Budai Balogh Sándor–Hartyányi István bibliography of Dezső Szabó. The same can be said in connection with Zsigmond Móricz and Oszkár Jászi. I found an article written by Móricz and an other one written by Jászi which can not be detected in their bibliography.

Several literary facts have come to light which were unknown or unspoken of for example the fact that Sándor Márai was a communist in 1919, which was not mentioned either by the writer himself or by his monographers.