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The Crisis of Old Regime in Transylvania and its Reflection in the Rhetoric of Interreligious Controversy in the Transylvanian Diets of the Reform Era

The most successful Hungarian experiment of crisis management was that one performed by liberal elite during the reform-era (1830-1848). In this sequence of time Hungarian history was overcharged with a crisis that affected every segment of social, political and economical activity. But the liberal peerage answered the threats with a program of modernization, which embraced the whole Hungarian society and radically transformed its framework.

Our study focuses on the political ideas expressed by Transylvanian deputies in during the interreligious debates of the reform-era in the Parliament. The importance of this research is provided not only by the fact that there have been written only a few of such studies in the last decades. It is also about the role of language and style in a political discourse. The language and rhetoric of a political address lead us to the content intended to be carried out by the speaker. This content reveals patterns of behavior, ways of facing crisis.

In the reformist era Hungarian society had to fight a multiple crisis. The national existence of Hungarians was threatened by the emerging national movements of minorities of the country (Hungarians constituted only a relative majority of the inhabitants of their own state with their amount of 40 % of total population). The manorialism put the gentry under pressure from the part of the large masses of bondmen, that cried for liberation. Peerage faced also an economical crisis on their own allodial estates, as they lacked the capital they needed to modernize their farming by introducing new, capitalist ways of producing goods. The interreligious question had been unsolved since more than a century, and by the way it have become obvious, that it can be fixed only by taking radical steps that would change the whole system of interreligious relationships between denominations. These problems, though with essential bias, were present in Hungary and Transylvania too.

The attitude of the states was waggling on a wide range scale from anxiety and retirement in the safety of the old system through a kind of populist pseudo-liberalism up to coming out with brave new ideas casting the shadows of future before.

The interreligious debate was a key problem of the time. It was essential to bruise the power of Catholic Church, which as institution was one of the main obstacles in the way of introducing a new society, based on personal and collective freedom and full equality of rights. This is why interreligious questions had no more dogmatic or denominational nature, instead they became a first-string political problem. On the top of the agenda were the problems of conversion from Catholicism to another Christian denomination, and that one of interreligious marriages. But the complaints of protestant states contained also the prohibition for protestant students to study abroad, the autonomy of protestant churches, inequality of material subventions provided by the state to churches etc. In Transylvania one of the most specific controversy was that one performed over the position of Transylvanian catholic bishops in the country's government, considered illegal by the majority of the states on the basis of 20/1791 election law.

The subject of this study is the analysis of speeches held during the debates on religious topics. The analysis focuses on the expressed political ideas. Our research is based on the results of József Takács, who distinguishes four great political discourses in Hungarian political life at the beginning of 19th century, and other two conceptions that were characteristic to the reform-era: liberal and conservative discourses. Though Mr. Takács's researches refer only to Hungarian political life, we think, they can also be found in Transylvanian political language of the period too. As an example we can appeal to the 1841

disputes on intermarriage, where the states sketched in a series of different opinions on resolving the question, from leaving intact the legislation to the suggestion of full secularization of marriages.

We can find such ways of handling crisis in our days' crisis management too. Our societies are spending huge energies to keep alive unsustainable systems based on consumption while it's very likely, that we lose lots of innovative suggestions just because of their radical way of managing essential issues, or social inconvenience.

In our study we try to provide historical examples of patterns of crisis management/mishandling to reinforce the confidence in a future that could be easily assured by ideas that currently are rejected by the mainstream society, respectively to avoid roundabouts in order to spare precious time.