

Media and Literature  
in Multilingual Hungary  
1770–1820

Edited by  
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# Underworld Dialogues of Sándor Szacs vay as Political Publicisms in Year 1789 of the Enlightenment-Era Newspaper *Magyar Kurír*\*

## *Sándor Szacs vay and the Bécsi Magyar Kurír*

Sándor Szacs vay, who was from a Transylvanian noble family and had studied in the lyceums of Debrecen and Bratislava [Pozsony/Pressburg] and then attended law school in Vienna, belonged to the Josephinist intellectual strata. In 1784 he returned to Bratislava, where he became the editor of the first Hungarian newspaper. Between 1784 and 1786, the *Magyar Hírmondó* [*Hungarian Herald*], edited by Szacs vay, still sympathized with Josephinist beliefs and remained in favour of the policies of Joseph II as a proponent and supporter of his reforms. In fact, he felt it was his duty to expose those who went against the regulations of the “good ruler”. Thanks to an enlightened court and moderate censorship, he was able to attack the conservative Hungarian church and government leadership, which was based on social hierarchy, in a satirical, Voltairian manner. He also scrutinized the pomp and wastefulness evoking the French “ancien regime” and the “dames” who symbolized its ignorance, as well as the fanatical and superstitious priesthood who sometimes even went against the laws of faith and religion, and their devotees who were deceived by them – that is, Hungarian feudal circumstances in general – thereby quickly gaining many enemies for himself. One thing is for certain, however: the Hungarian newspaper was at the height of its popularity at the time, with 449 subscribers,

\* The author is a college associate professor and dean at the University of Szeged, Gyula Juhász Faculty of Education.

a number it would never exceed after Szacs vay was dismissed due to financial disputes.<sup>1</sup>

In 1786, Szacs vay, who had by then committed himself completely to journalism, along with Dániel Tállyai, previously the editor of the *Pressburger Zeitung* and publisher of a Slovakian newspaper, *Presspürské nowiny*, were considering launching their own Hungarian newspaper. Dániel Tállyai, who in that particular era can be thought of as a businessman who saw the money-making possibilities in publishing, planned to launch two other media outlets apart from his Slovakian paper. He intended to start a Hungarian language newspaper as an alternative to the *Magyar Hírmondó*, and a German language newspaper as an alternative to the *Pressburger Zeitung*, both to create commercial competition with the existing papers.<sup>2</sup>

A call for subscriptions was issued for the *Bécsi Magyar Kurír* [*Hungarian Courier of Vienna*] and the *Pressburger Merkur*, but local press owners Patzkó and Landerer, even though Joseph II had put an end to press monopoly, did everything in their power to prevent the newspapers from being published. The campaign – which was clearly based on financial interests – ended with the victory of the printing press owners. Eventually, one unauthorized sample issue of each newspaper was published in the July of 1786, for which the city council had the press owner, Weber arrested. However, this was not the main reason why Szacs vay had to leave Bratislava. Apart from the press owners themselves, he had made enemies that were simply too powerful –, chiefly among them the priesthood and the dames he had continually criticized in the *Magyar Hírmondó*, as well as “the High Reverends and Dignitaries”.<sup>3</sup>

From the end of the year the story continues in Vienna, where the launch of the *Magyar Kurír* could not be prevented on grounds of press privilege and where the imperial capital’s enlightened atmosphere was very attractive. On December 2, 1786, the second issue was published in the capital city of the Empire and from January 1787 to the first issue of the year 1793, when he was dismissed from the newspaper, Szacs vay edited and published the *Magyar Kurír*, the paper known in professional literature as “the second Hungarian language newspaper”.<sup>4</sup>

1 DEZSÉNYI Béla, “A Magyar Kurír és a cenzúra 1787–1793” [“The *Magyar Kurír* and Censorship, 1787–1793”], *Magyar Könyvszemle* 83, No. 1 (1967): 21.

2 Ibid., 22.

3 Dezsényi writes in more detail about the “Bratislava antecedents” in the study referred to above (ibid., 21–27): according to its premise, Szacs vay was “placed in an idle position” after 1793 for reasons that date back to this early journalistic period.

4 KÓKAY György, BUZINKAY Géza and MURÁNYI Gábor, *A magyar sajtó története* [*The History of the Hungarian Press*] (Budapest: Sajtóház Kiadó, 2001), 36–40.



*Turkish war in “Délvidék”*

Austria launched the last Habsburg-Ottoman war against the Turks in alliance with the Russians in 1787. The imperial army was led by Emperor Joseph II because he believed it to be his duty to rise to the challenges of wartime with his army. The battles went on for a year and a half, with varied fortunes. There were great losses on both sides, and when the Turkish armies reached the Southern areas of Hungary the emperor ordered recruitment and decreed that the Hungarian counties ship grain to the forces and pay military aid. All this only furthered the estates' resistance to the preparation of a new tax system. The county councils wrote petitions to protest against the emperor's regulations, saying that only the diet (i.e. parliament) had the right to vote on recruitment and new taxes. The emperor, who had contracted malaria, arrived home seriously ill after the campaign and his condition further worsened in 1789. Although he promised the estates that he would call a diet, he was unable to appease them. When the allies, led by General Laudon, were finally able to capture Belgrade, Joseph II received the news on his deathbed. After his death, his successor, Emperor Leopold II signed the separate peace treaty of Sistova [Свищов], in which Austria relinquished Belgrade and agreed to restore the pre-war status quo. Russia continued the Turkish war on its own. The peace agreement of 1791 put an end to the almost four-and-a-half century-long conflict between the Hungarians and the Turks.<sup>5</sup>

*The underworld dialogues of Sándor Szacs vay*

Szacs vay unequivocally became the most progressive and most significant journalist and editor of the era in Vienna, attaining high quality in progressive publicism compared to other media outlets of the time. He was not immune to the internal conflicts that became characteristic of the Josephinist intellectual strata with the growth of resistance from the nobles and estates, since due to his correspondents, he remained in close contact with public life at home, gained knowledge of the people's dissatisfaction with the ruler, which was exacerbated by the Turkish war and spread from the nobles to the farmers

5 KATUS László, “Magyarország a Habsburg Monarchiában” [“Hungary in the Habsburg Monarchy”], in *Magyarország története*, ed. ROMSICS Ignác, 488–773 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2010), 536, 584.

and to the intellectuals as well. Szacsvey's newspaper followed this incremental change very well, which change had a characteristic impact on the general atmosphere of that era.

At first, he was an enthusiastic Josephinist, calling Joseph II the "wise ruler" and "the sweet father of our sweet homeland". On the page he advocated for religious tolerance, attacked the demands of the estates and most of all the church officials, supported the abolition of tax exemption for the nobles and condemned the movements of the Netherlands and France. However, in reaction to the political changes, he later altered his tone.

While retaining a Josephinist attitude, he no longer described the events in France as a rebellion but turned toward them with sympathy. He played an important role in spreading the news of the French revolution due to the unique style of his dispatches and commentaries. His sources were foreign newspapers but since he could only broadcast this topic based on the contents of the authorized Vienna paper, he used the popular fictitious genre of underworld dialogues used by enlightened authors of the time to complement the official dispatches. To further deter the vigilance of the censors, in Szacsvey's newspaper, it was sometimes animals (sparrows, swallows, dogs), sometimes historical figures (Machiavelli, Alexander the Great, Democritus), and at other times fictional heroes (Aesop) who gave their interpretations of the "French uproar", all this in a disapproving Josephinist tone.

Despite growing pressure from the censors he gave news on the other significant foreign policy issue affecting the Habsburg Empire at the time, the Turkish war,<sup>6</sup> through direct battlefield dispatches as well as from writings adapted from the official Viennese paper, which he marked with an asterisk<sup>7</sup> so as to separate them from his own writings.

6 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 13–14, 35–36, 53–57, 59–62, 78–80, 93–98, 118–120, 125–127, 132–138, 144–146, 151–154, 176–178, 195–199, 204–208, 210, 237–240, 254–257, 325–331, 340–344, 353–356, 389–392, 413–420, 429–433, 444–450, 454–458, 460–466, 467–471, 474, 479–481, 484–486, 495–496, 500–505, 509–514, 531–532, 553, 555–560, 581, 594–596, 605–608, 611–614, 619–624, 627–640, 651–656, 660–666, 679–682, 695–697, 708–710, 713–714, 719–722, 726–728, 742–747, 755–767, 771–776, 787–796, 811–814, 820–828, 833–834, 835–849, 858–861, 867–870, 883–890, 899–914, 913–920, 941–949, 962–968, 977–986, 993–999, 1009–1016, 1018–1023, 1024, 1049–1055, 1085–1089, 1097–1140, 1141–1143, 1145–1176, 1182–1190, 1193–1208, 1211–1220, 1229–1239, 1242–1252, 1277–1287, 1293–1301, 1315–1319, 1329–1331, 1341–1346, 1349–1359, 1365–1374, 1382–1387, 1391–1396, 1410–1411, 1418–1421, 1438–1443, 1463–1465.

7 For example *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, 1789: 915–916; "A' Fő-Hadi-Tanátsból közelebb ki-adott Tudósítás ez: (\*\*) megjelöléssel" ["Published Report from the Supreme War Council: Marked with (\*\*)"].

He tried to emphasize how successfully the Hungarian troops were able to cope on the battlefield. For example, in the July 22, 1789 issue of the newspaper, he printed a long summary on the Erdődy Hussars,<sup>8</sup> composed mostly of young men from the counties of Fejér, Veszprém, Vas and Sopron stationed in the Banat, through whose story he aimed to prove that “Hungarians are generally good soldiers against all enemies but especially against the Turks”.<sup>9</sup> Even later he always found the means to detail the “history” of the Hussar Regiments who were glorious in battle.<sup>10</sup>

He sought to expand his own network of reporters in various ways. For example, he printed the following notice in his paper: “For those who send us reports from the camps of this present war [...], we will send free issues of the newspaper for three years”.<sup>11</sup> He also reassured his correspondents that no-one would see their letters apart from the censor, so they could write at ease because “the gentleman who examines the paper crosses out from our letters what should not be there; otherwise no-one else has the authority to find out who wrote what”.<sup>12</sup> The *Magyar Kurír* vehemently addressed the question of publicity in the July 4, 1789 issue, using the pretext of the newspaper stamp tax implemented by the government, a regulation which had been previously published:<sup>13</sup> “Ideas are free; however, if they are recently written on newspaper pages, a half Kreuzer has to be paid for them. [...] The *Kurír*’s horse is stamped under the branding iron; tell the truth or just lie – the price is half a Kreuzer anyhow!! Tell the truth, then.”<sup>14</sup>

In the English dispatch of the same issue he detailed the circumstances of the implementation of the Stamp Act in England and made bold statements on the subject of freedom of the press in relation to it: “This is the straight path on which the Stamp arrived from Vienna [i.e. news stamp]: oh but what pain! What a great pity that with this Stamp the freedom of writing that comes with it could not come from England. – In England such freedoms do the journalists have who pay the Stamp that they may freely speak their minds against the King, the Parliament, the Ministries, Heaven and Earth, and this can be sold in common papers.”<sup>15</sup>

8 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 798–800.

9 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 797.

10 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 1057–1062.

11 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 706.

12 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 706.

13 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 582–584.

14 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 707–708.

15 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 717.

Szacsvay told his readers of the establishment of public access to parliamentary proceedings according to which “what happens in the Parliament is made known to the people in 14 days from the News Papers, so they gladly pay even a high price for them [...] through these, everything is brought to the knowledge of the People; here, writing and printing a Newspaper is allowed without any screening”.<sup>16</sup>

He purposely did not replace or correct the parts of his reports that had been taken out by the censors as a way to let his readers know his opinion. He left them empty and marked them with crossed out lines and humorous messages (“Left in after screening”, “Screen gap”, “Look for it in the screen”, “the Kurír is not even permitted to say it”, “we will not write anything more here because the *Budai Újság* [*Buda Newspaper*] also has only this much on the matter, but this also means something”, etc.)<sup>17</sup>

The volume of 1789 reports from the beginning on the antecedents of the last Estates-General called together by the French king (election of ambassadors, the economic situation, internal political atmosphere),<sup>18</sup> its commencement, the demands of the burghers and the topics they wished to discuss and the events of the first sessions – of course,<sup>19</sup> all within the limits of censorship, but expanding those limits in the manner previously indicated.

On June 27, 1789 the *Kurír* was published, significantly abbreviated by censors and marked in Szacsvay’s usual style. It reported that the Estates-General continued to debate: “the contentions and the smoke of internal fire have not yet ceased; but nothing notable, worthy of reading has happened, except that not long ago –”.<sup>20</sup> Then, where the dispatch had been cut short, where the censor had removed the text, he published an implicative fable about the wealthy French tailor who attained noble status and an impoverished marquis, in which the tailor, derided for his low birth, tricks the arrogant marquis and says: “because even now I am not ashamed of this craft that has made me a rich and noble man”.<sup>21</sup>

On July 11 he cautiously reported on the activities of the June 24 Estates General, when Louis XVI declared the previous decisions of the Estates General to be void and attempted to dissolve the assembly but his attempts were

16 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 717–718.

17 For example *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 73, 275, 560, 592, 596, 603, 713, 714, 874, 896, 927, 952, 1333–1335, 1441, 1444.

18 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 120, 130–131, 358–359, 486, 492–493, 514–516.

19 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 566–567, 574–575, 609.

20 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 682.

21 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 682–684.

declared unacceptable by the burgher estate and the multitude. He reviewed Necker's discussion with the king and its result, then from the previously detailed Josephinist perspective, so as to silence the censors, he characterized the events as follows: "The cup of Pandemonium is already full here; the burgher estate is unruly and says that they are the ones who constitute the French people; it would not wish to distinguish itself from the Noble Estate: this seems to bear bad consequences".<sup>22</sup> He continued to report on the events of that day in the July 19th issue of the newspaper, giving an account of the burghers arming themselves, attacks against rural manors and castles, the soldiers' oaths that they would not bear arms against their own people as well as on the political victory of the third estate: "the Clerical Estate joined the Burgher Estate and afterward practically forced the Noble Estate to join them".<sup>23</sup> After reporting the news, he could not resist reacting to the events in an excellent squib, in which he discussed the absolute power the French kings had held over their people since Louis XIV as well as their European influence, and alluded to the radical changes that were a foot thanks to the current political situation: "How powerful were the kings of France. In an assembly of crowns the French king was the greatest and when he spoke, all listened; only the great Frederic mumbled occasionally. [...] This once mighty king has had boundaries forced upon him by his lowliest serfs, the Burgher Estate."<sup>24</sup>

Szacsvay later revisited the French events several times, briefly summarizing the news he received on the political and economic situation according to which the crisis was still not over. In a short commentary on July 25 he reported that "in Paris and in all of France the inner peace is not yet whole; poverty digs elbow deep into the French breadbasket".<sup>25</sup>

On July 29, in a new piece, he allowed himself to use the following expression, stating that since the common people of France have noticed that "the noble Estate, in fact, the greatest ruler in the world is also born naked, dies naked and is buried naked, so they do not want to believe that they do not have the lawful right to their natural lot: this is why there is always a new uproar in Paris [...], which will always end in bloodshed."<sup>26</sup>

The August 5, 1789 issue of the paper can be considered one of the zeniths of Szacs vay's political publicism, in which he attempted to review the events that

22 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 751–752.

23 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 781.

24 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 782.

25 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 817.

26 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 831.

had taken place thus far in a longer piece. However, with an eye to censorship, he chose to do so in the genre of fictitious dialogues from the underworld, in which a French and a Hungarian sparrow meet in the hereafter and tell each other the stories of their lives and deaths, showing at once the French and Hungarian internal political situations.<sup>27</sup>

The French sparrow, which was sent to the Elysian fields through starvation and was born on the same day as the immortal Voltaire,<sup>28</sup> gives a detailed account based on French newspaper reports of the events that took place from 1788 until then: the great famine and cold which brought destruction during the winter of 1788/1789, the political battles between the king and the burgher estate, the king and the common people arming themselves against one another and the many violent acts. “So, my dear sparrow Friend, due to the famine and the uproar France is under such dire circumstances that only in the past few days more than 800 people lie dead in their own gore in King Louis XV’s market square.”<sup>29</sup>

After this, when reporting on the revolution he was forced to use the form of the Elysian dialogues yet strived to give detailed accounts of the post-July 4 happenings to his readers.<sup>30</sup> For example, in the August 22 issue he published the correspondence between the king, Necker and the national assembly regarding the matter of the replaced minister’s return to Paris. Based on the accounts of the Parisian papers, he informed his readers of the first decisions made by the National Constituent Assembly<sup>31</sup> as, based on Rousseau’s “Social Contract” and Montesquieu’s “Theory of the separation of powers” – among others –, it worked upon the “happiness of the People based on the fine measure of the Laws of nature”.<sup>32</sup>

In the August 26 issue he could only give an account of the cruelties perpetrated during the revolution and the atrocities committed against the aristocrats and the nobles in the form of Elysian publicism in the form of a dialogue between Count Artois’ dead dog and Cerberus, suggesting<sup>33</sup> that the revolu-

27 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 851–858.

28 Voltaire was born on 21 November, 1694.

29 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 855–856.

30 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 874–880, 893–897, 930–939, 949–955, 974–975, 986–990, 999–1000, 1055, 1093–1094, 1140–1141, 1208, 1220–1224, 1254–1260, 1290, 1301–1304, 1331, 1347, 1359, 1423.

31 These are built into the fundamental document of the French Revolution, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, adopted on August 26, 1789.

32 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 933–934.

33 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 949–955.

tion would spread to regions beyond the river Rhine, for example to Belgium.<sup>34</sup> Even in this form the passage was heavily restricted by the censors and naturally Szacs vay could not let this pass without comment: “It is well known, Dear Cerberus, what is the lot of we dogs! We must not bark much about Belgium, so that none shall shear our wolf skin fur; that is why I am silent here.”<sup>35</sup> He considered it a veritable comedy that the Assembly had named the king the “Restorer of freedom”.<sup>36</sup> “Oh Cerberus, I was once at a comedy, a comedy written by Molière, titled: The doctor acting against his own will.”<sup>37</sup>

Szacs vay’s next report on the events of the revolution, based on Parisian newspapers, came on October 24, 1789. He provided accounts of the achievements of the Assembly, the famine, as well as the Women’s March<sup>38</sup> and Louis XVI moving to Paris with his family.<sup>39</sup> After informing the readers of these happenings, he stated with an apt feel for politics that the Assembly and the Parisian people were constantly gaining power over the royal family. He alluded to the decreasing popularity of the king, and especially the queen, and predicted the final outcome with the words of a clairvoyant: “but after all the situation is such in France that it is no wonder they pray for them in Rome”.<sup>40</sup> In a short article on November 7 he informed the readers that the royal family was still not being allowed out of Paris, “the King has no choice but to gladly sign the regulations put forth by the Assembly”.<sup>41</sup>

Besides the events taking place in France, he also kept a close watch via newspaper sources on reports of the other freedom movements of Europe. Apart from providing positive commentaries on these, he also sought to emphasize the theoretical relationship with the freedom movements of North America and Western Europe. For example, in a June 24, 1789 dispatch he made an interesting comparison with the Polish Republican movement, which was on a different level as regards social development: “The Russian Empress Catherine has moved all her armies and food supplies out of Ukraine. The Patriot Poles, now holding discussions at the Parliament on how to improve their societal rights, are saying that after the death of the present Polish king there should be no more kings,

34 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 952.

35 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 953.

36 I.e. “Restaurateur de la liberté”.

37 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 954.

38 October 4, 1789.

39 October 6, 1789.

40 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 1224.

41 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 1290.

and that instead they would make their country a Free Community. – All nations are starting to adopt Washington’s philosophy and whilst in Europe Monarchies are rising, the French People wish for English mode of freedom.”<sup>42</sup>

In the July 11, 1789 issue’s Warsaw dispatch regarding the Polish nobility voluntarily voting for military aid, he quoted with serious political implications the speech of the wealthy nobleman Rubikovsky, in which he advocated for the voluntary tax action of the nobility: “Let us give the tithe to our Dear Homeland from the assets which we have taken from it [...]. I would rather give a fourth of all my fortune [...] for the protection of my homeland than to have [...] a stranger ransack my house and treat me dishonourably in the land where I was born. – If fate would so have it that our Dear Homeland and Country is to be lost; then we are ready to be buried together in the coffin of our dear Homeland... and to extinguish the fire of our Homeland’s dishonour with our blood, which we Poles, up to the year 1772 have tolerated without so much as shedding a drop of our own blood [...], but I voluntarily swear that of my annual assets I will take 40 thousand animals of which I am determined to gladly sacrifice a tenth part each year for the general use of my country.”<sup>43</sup> The nobility’s volunteering to pay taxes and willingness to make sacrifices for the common good were portrayed in an unequivocally positive light by Szacsvey, and he also reported on other such pledges, sending a clear message to his readers, the Hungarian nobles. On September 5, he published a brief report on Holland about “a secret place where Patriots surreptitiously hold meetings. It does not seem important; but it is big news to those who understand.”<sup>44</sup>

By 1789, local reports were definitely taking a very different tone from official news sources and painted an increasingly darker picture. One of the *Kurír*’s correspondents reported from Braşov [Brassó/Kronstadt] that “we, here on the borders, are quiet; but I do not know what our wives and children will eat in the future”.<sup>45</sup> A correspondent from Háromszék [Covasna] reported that the price of a cubic fathom of wheat was rising to 13 Forints, while wheat of poorer quality had risen to 10 Forints. “As a result of this proportion, all things for eating and drinking are so expensive that in certain places the poor can hardly sustain themselves; in some places something to eat or drink cannot even be found for money... In Hungary they are complaining of the same everywhere.”<sup>46</sup>

42 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 666.

43 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 749–750.

44 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 1003.

45 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 698.

46 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 718.



At the beginning of 1789, according to the accounts of the *Magyar Kurír*, instead of a merry carnival season and a beautiful wife, people wished one another peace, health and protection from famine and plague.<sup>47</sup> On May 2, he wrote in a letter to Count András Hadik, commander of the southern armies, about the farmers starving due to confiscation, describing them as “those who can hardly stand the weight that this war has put on them”.<sup>48</sup>

Once again, Szacs vay found a way to express his opinion in an allegorical tale on the consequences of the Turkish war, the diseases and epidemics and the people who were in hardship due to the burden of having to put up soldiers – clearly alluding to the responsibility of the court and the establishment of a “liberating” army. The story is about a Gardener whose garden is pilfered by a rabbit, so he turns to his Master for help, who immediately “grabs a hunting rifle, 36 hunting dogs and has 3 hunters join him”<sup>49</sup> and they begin the hunt, stamping all over the vegetable garden. In the end the rabbit escapes through a hole in the fence. “Upon which the Master of the garden sends for the Gardener and reports to him that the rabbit has been chased away from the garden like the Great Leader from the Banat. – The Gardener makes his way all around the garden and starts to scratch the base of his ear. – So! He says: the rabbit did indeed run away; but you, My Lord, and your hunters and My Lord’s Dogs have ruined my garden more than the rabbit could have in a hundred years. [...] Who is the Gardener, the Farmer and the rabbit? Those who wish to know ought to give it some thought.”<sup>50</sup>

In the Elysian dialogue of August 5, 1789 mentioned earlier, Szacs vay clearly alludes through the Hungarian sparrow’s account to the internal difficulties the Habsburg Empire was facing: the Turkish war and the famines caused by poor economic conditions. The Sparrow was born during the happy time of the rule of the late Empress Maria Theresa, “when a bushel of wheat, even the best, was only 8 Groschens, and now a cubic fathom can be sold at 6–7–8 Forints in many places [...]. We Sparrows indeed have never known starvation in this happy country; but last year and this we have suffered much strife; because one neighbour is an enemy and the other offers help here [...], many have been taken, many have fallen prey, and I am afraid that even after next Christmas those of my sons who are still alive will suffer unexpected want.”<sup>51</sup> This work carefully

47 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 3.

48 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 352.

49 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 16.

50 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 17.

51 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 856–857.

notes that besides the burdens of the Turkish war the billeted German and allied soldiers meant a serious burden to the population and that accommodation and confiscations were also causes of the famine and the uncertain internal political situation.

Even though his attention was mainly focused on the revolutionary events and the situation caused by the war, he did come to emphasize and publish an increasing number of writings on the linguistic and cultural efforts of the patriotic movement, in contrast with what we saw when he was editing the *Magyar Hírmondó*, where he seemed to be indifferent on the subject.

By the beginning of the '90s, thanks to modifying its reports in this direction based on intuiting social needs and interests, the *Magyar Kurír* experienced a great increase in readership and thus in influence and significance. By the end of 1788, Szacs vay could already boast of 800 subscribers to his newspaper, a number which no Hungarian media outlet had reached before. In 1789 the number grew to 900 and in 1790 to 1200, which showed the undiminished development of the paper and its readership. This was certainly due to Szacs vay's careful but growing sympathy towards the estates' resistance, which was at the same time not free of criticism. The culmination of these sentiments could be seen in his 1790–91 parliamentary dispatches.<sup>52</sup>

Under the protective umbrella of the Josephinist court, and during Leopold II's era of temporary relief, even though he was subject to serious attacks, his political publicism remained uninfluenced. In fact, during this time, instead of spreading enlightened Viennese notions, his attention turned increasingly toward the Hungarian reality and the offenses suffered by the nation. Greatly surpassing his era, he wrote his short political squibs during this time and can be personally credited with establishing the genre in Hungary.<sup>53</sup>

After the death of Leopold II, due to political changes, his old and new adversaries were able to have him removed from the paper in 1793.<sup>54</sup>

It is known from literary sources that the pretext that was the basis for which the *Magyar Kurír* was banned was the report published on the French king's trial. In the paper's first issue of the year 1793 there was an article about the interrogation of the king despite the fact that the censor had removed it. Another issue raised was that the king, addressed as "Sie" in German, was translated to "Your

52 *Bécsi Magyar Kurír*, (1789): 101, 140–145.

53 КÓКАУ György, "Hírlap és folyóirat-irodalmunk a 18. században" ["Newspaper and Periodical Literature in the 18th Century"], in *A magyar sajtó története I. 1705–1848*, ed. SZABOLCSI Miklós and КÓКАУ György, 37–229 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 140.

54 *Ibid.*, 150–151.

Grace” in Hungarian, which was considered disrespectful to the king. It did not matter that when in another Hungarian paper, the *Hadi és Más Nevezetes Történetek* [*Military and Other Famous Stories*], supported by magnates Ferenc Széchenyi, György Festetics, Pál Teleki, the article was published without the censor’s permission, the only punishment was a fine, later cancelled. On January 3 the Chancellery announced that the *Magyar Kurír* had been banned. Szacs vay turned to the sovereign with a petition which made it clear that he had already seen his position as disadvantaged compared to other papers that better aligned themselves with the politics of the Chancellery, and in which he gave an account of the above-mentioned harassments from which he always had to defend his newspaper. What is more, he had been deprived – along with his wife and child – of his living, since he had no background other than his business, the *Magyar Kurír*, which in the past six years had increased the Treasury’s income by 30,000 Forints and earned the printing works 14,000 Forints. He complained that the censor had not proceeded according to guidelines and deleted all sorts of things in the said article that was at the same time published by other papers. The same censor had permitted another paper to publish the same article that he was actually being punished for.<sup>55</sup>

The result of all this was that his exile proved irrevocable, and he was never to hold a position as a journalist again, either in Hungary or in Transylvania up until his death in 1815. Ever since his time in Bratislava he had been accumulating offenses against the church and the aristocracy through his satirical articles and sharp diatribes, his journalistic qualifications but especially due to the shift in power – first the Estates’ opposition’s attacks against the Josephinists, later the compromise between the court and the Estates. To these he did not want nor was he able to adapt, and he remained permanently alone. The notions as well as the editorial methods in which he believed became completely unviable in the new political system and nearly half a century was necessary for Hungarian journalism to reach the level again where it had been between 1787 and 1793.<sup>56</sup>

55 Ibid., 150–151.

56 For more details see DÖBÖR András, “Egy székely hírlapszerkesztő élete a bécsi sajtópolitika hullámverésében: Szacs vay Sándor és a Magyar Kurír története” [“The Life of a Székely/Secler News Editor in the Wavering of Viennese Press Policy: Sándor Szacs vay and the History of Magyar Kurír”], in *Közös múlt és közös jövő*, ed. KISS Gábor Ferenc, 31–38 (Szeged–Arad: Belvedere Meridionale, 2008).