

extract

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The Appointment of Bishop Miklós Dudás to the Episcopal See of Hajdúdorog in 1939

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1. Introduction

When István Miklósy, Bishop of Hajdúdorog (1913-1937) died in the early hours of 29 October 1937, the chief consideration about the appointment of his successor was the expectation for the new bishop not only to be energetic but also to be open to compromise, a quality inevitable both for survival in the realm of politics and for cooperation with the Latin-rite bishops. Conditions prevailing in the Eparchy are well illustrated by a letter sent to the Budapest Nunciature via the Jesuit Béla Bangha.¹ The writer of the letter, a prominent official of the Greek Catholic parish of Debrecen, committed his thoughts to writing on the very day(!) of Bishop Miklósy's death in order to draw the attention of the influential Jesuit father to the sorry state of the Eparchy, as well as to the Basilian monks Miklós Dudás and Imre János Liki, whom he saw as the promise of revival and progress.

Not a single Latin-rite bishop attended Bishop Miklósy's funeral. Even the Budapest Nunciature entrusted the responsibility of representing itself to Arch-Provost Jenő Bányay.² The government

1 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (=AAV) Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Ungheria (=Arch. Nunz. Ungheria) busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 254r-256v.

2 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 251r.

of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog was assumed by Arch-Provost Jenő Bányay, as Vicar Capitular. Of this, the Vicar himself notified Nuncio Angelo Rotta,³ who began to request information necessary for the selection of a successor two weeks later.

2. First opinions delivered to the nunciature in Budapest

At the Archives of the Budapest Nunciature, a letter dated 17 November, addressed to Lajos Szmrecsányi, Archbishop of Eger, has been preserved,⁴ yet the first reply of 20 November came not from him but from Gyula Czapik, Canon of Nagyvárad (Oradea) who had been requested orally to do this task. In his response,⁵ Gyula Czapik, living in Budapest, emphasises that he does not convey his personal view but provides a summary of the information obtained from the Greek Catholic priests he has consulted. In his report, he mentions eight names altogether in three sets, the arrangement of which, along with the quantity of information for the individual names, also suggests a kind of ranking. The first part contains two names, supplied with numbers as well. Number one is István Szántay-Szémán, Vicar of the Apostolic Exarchate of Miskolc, while number two belongs to the Basilian monk Miklós Dudás. The inclusion of Szántay-Szémán on the list of eligible candidates is somewhat surprising. It is almost certain that the name of the Greek Catholic priest and scholar was added to the list – actually to its top – in response to the Nuncio's express interest. It seems obvious that the Nuncio's attention was primarily captured by Szántay-Szémán's academic activities and he had no knowledge of the fact that he was a married man. Thus, despite occupying the first place on the list compiled

3 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 259r.

4 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 260rv.

5 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 261r-263r. On Gyula Czapik's covering letter, Nuncio Rotta wrote that he had orally requested Zoltán Meszlényi, Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom, as well to formulate his opinion. However, the opinion of the Bishop, who would later suffer martyrdom, is nowhere to be found in the records.

by Czapik (in all probability, in line with the Nuncio's interest), the epithet *uxoratus* next to his name also indicates that he could not be accounted with in selecting the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog.

Conversely, considerably more extensive information is provided about the Basilian monk Miklós Dudás, listed as number two. In it, his Máriapócs and rural origins are highlighted – a detail made significant by the potential concomitant implication that the detrimental influence of a sizeable clerical extended family was not to be feared. His thorough theological training, which he acquired at the Collegio Germanico ed Ungarico in Rome, is also accentuated. It is noted that, in addition to Italian and German, he is fluent in some Slavic languages as well. No-one may question his Hungarian sentiments and patriotic attitude, which have played a central part in building his political network. As Superior of the Basilian Order in Hungary, he has demonstrated his aptitude not only by constructing the Basilian Religious House of Hajdúdorog but by settling Basilian sisters in Máriapócs as well. His rhetorical and public-speaking skills appear to be suitable in every respect. Among the candidate's negative traits, Canon Czapik's informants stressed his autocratic character. However, on this point, Czapik remarks: Given the torpid church life of the Hungarian Greek Catholics, this characteristic of the candidate may rather prove to be a virtue for a leader.

With no number attached, separated from the previous and the following set, the third candidate in Czapik's report is the Basilian monk Imre János Liki. Two years younger than Miklós Dudás, this candidate was also a native of Máriapócs and boasted a similarly thorough theological education. As opposed to Miklós Dudás, he was less well-known to the clergy of the Eparchy as, authorised by the Order, he had primarily been active in Czechoslovakia. His outstanding intellectual abilities were matched with great modesty. Canon Czapik notes that he has not been given a real chance to prove his abilities and readiness to act yet.

In the third part of the report, five members of the Chapter of Hajdúdorog – Jenő Bányay, László Sereghy, Sándor Mihalovics, István Bihon and Viktor (Nicefor) Melles – are listed. Their brief descriptions reveal that the only reason for their inclusion among the candidates was their widowed or celibate status. In his summary, Canon Czapik comments that the clergy of the Eparchy look forward to the appointment of Miklós Dudás. Some also evaluate the chances of Canon István Bihon as good because he is said to enjoy the support of Prince-Primate Jusztinián Serédi. His appointment would mean the continuation of the Miklósy Era though, which is not desired by the *zelanti* seeking to renew the Eparchy.

The chronologically second opinion is from Lajos Szmrecsányi, Archbishop of Eger.⁶ The Archbishop of Eger did not wish to avail himself of the opportunity to express his views about specific candidates. Instead, he primarily devotes his letter to discussing the grievances inflicted upon him by Bishop Miklósy. He resents the Greek Catholic Bishop striving to restrain those intending to switch to the Latin Rite, though he himself assessed the justifications of the requests as fully founded in every instance. He suggests that, in selecting a successor, it must be ensured that the Greek Catholic Bishop will show greater flexibility and readiness to accept compromise in relation to Latin prelates. By raising the subject, Archbishop Szmrecsányi touches upon the gravest Greek Catholic issue of the interwar period and gives it a completely one-sided interpretation. Naturally, Bishop Miklósy sought to stem the wave of rite changing but all he could achieve with his attempts was provoke the antipathy of the Latin prelates.

6 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 264r-265v. The opinion of Lajos Szmrecsányi, Archbishop of Eger. Ibid. fol. 266r. Rotta thanks Szmrecsányi for the report.

3. First contacts between the Holy See and the Hungarian government

After Bishop Miklósy's death, contemporaneously with the actions of the Budapest Nuncio – as a matter of course – the Hungarian Government also took some steps. As early as 6 November, the Hungarian Embassy to the Holy See dispatched a note in French to the Secretariat of State of the Vatican, requesting that, in selecting the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog, the Holy See not make a decision or make a promise to anybody until it discussed the question with the Hungarian Government.⁷ From the Secretariat of State, Archbishop Giuseppe Pizzardo sent the note to Nuncio Rotta, quoting the opinion of the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Cardinal Eugène Tisserant, in his enclosed letter.⁸ Archbishop Pizzardo ordered the Nuncio to find out what special requirements the Hungarian Government might have concerning the matter. In the note, he felt the sentence alluding to the active involvement of the Hungarian Government in the process of choosing a successor peculiar. He asked the Nuncio to clarify this point.

Cardinal Tisserant deemed the situation of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog to be extremely delicate and voiced his fear that substantial damage could be done by unwanted interference of a political nature in the process of selecting the new bishop. On 22 November, the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches himself wrote a letter to Nuncio Rotta,⁹ even making concrete suggestions about the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog. In Cardinal Tisserant's proposal, as a possible successor to Bishop Miklósy, Bishop Bazil Takács, Hierarch of the Ruthenian Greek Catholics in the United States (1924-1948), could also be considered. He signals to the Nuncio that Lajos Shvoy, Bishop

7 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 269r. In the note, the Ambassador misnames Bishop Miklósy as Miskolczy, as an additional sign of the deceased prelate's isolation.

8 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 267rv.

9 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 268rv.

of Székesfehérvár, knew the candidate well.¹⁰ Simultaneously, he also requested him to engage in cautious information gathering about the person of Bazil Takács so as to discover whether the Hungarian Government would have any objections to him on grounds that he was originally from the territory of the current Czechoslovakia, as well as to gauge how the clergy and the faithful of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog would receive his appointment. Furthermore, Cardinal Tisserant also referred to the fact that, conveying his purely personal opinion, the Adviser for Church Relations of the Hungarian Embassy to the Holy See, Ferenc Luttor, had also proposed the appointment of Archbishop Antal Papp, Apostolic Exarch of Miskolc, which was immediately rejected by the Cardinal though. He thought that such a choice would not be received favourably and the Archbishop was simply too old to assume governance of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog.

Nuncio Rotta replied to Archbishop Pizzardo and Cardinal Tisserant on 6 December.¹¹ In his letter, he notes that he has not been able to collect meaningful information because Prince-Primate Serédi has been away for three weeks and he hopes to learn about the Government's intentions through him. He means to use his correspondence to clarify the role of the Hungarian Government. He furnishes a reminder that, according to the established practice in Hungary, prior to episcopal appointments, the Holy See gives the Hungarian Government two months to communicate its observations and submit its proposals. The agreement named *intesa semplice*, i.e. 'simple consensus', was in force between the Holy See and Hungary from 1927. Under the agreement, episcopal appointments would be preceded by bilateral negotiations, at the end of which the Government could make observations about the candidates. In practice, this meant that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs handed over the list of the names

10 On 13 December, the Nuncio actually sent Bishop Shvoy the letter requesting information. AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 270rv.

11 ASV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 273r-275v.

of candidates acceptable to the Government on an ordinary sheet of paper to the Nuncio. As Bishop Miklósy died on 29 October, the Government had time practically until the end of December. Thus, in response to the request in the note, it could be stated that the Holy See would at all times respect the rights of others and would not take any action before the expiry of the two months' deadline.

4. The unusual proposal of the Budapest government

On 17 December, the Hungarian Government exercised its right guaranteed by *intesa semplice*. This is reported in Nuncio Rotta's detailed letter to Secretary of State Pacelli from 23 December, with a copy sent to Cardinal Tisserant as well.¹² To the letter, he encloses the list of names personally handed over by Minister of Foreign Affairs Kálmán Kánya,¹³ no doubt dispensing with all the properties of an official document. The text of the no more than five-line long document in French, without a heading, date or signature, is the following:

Évêché catholique de rite oriental de Hajdudorog. Basile Takács, évêque catholique de rite oriental d'Amérique. Nicolas Dudás, provincial de l'Ordre des Basilites, supérieur du Monastère Basilite à Mária-Pócs.

At the top of the sheet, the Nuncio wrote in pencil that it had been given to him by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 17 December 1937, during their personal meeting. However, the bottom features a positively surprising note, written in ink, also by Nuncio Rotta. It relates that, the next day, i.e. on 18 December, the Minister of Foreign Affairs sent his Chief of Staff, Count Csáky, to the Nunciature, informing the Nuncio that an error had been made in compiling the list and the first place was not supposed to be occupied by Bishop Takács but by the Basilian Miklós Dudás. This interlude is recounted by the Nuncio in his letter as well, but he adds that, after all, the person

¹² ASV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 276r-279r.

¹³ ASV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 54, fasc. 2, fol. 27r.

of Bishop Takács continues to be acceptable to the Government. At the same time, it may be taken for granted that it did matter to the Government who was in the first place. By this time, the information that – as will be seen – would arrive at the Nunciature only a month later might already have reached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the beginning of his detailed letter, Nuncio Rotta unequivocally states that now he has all the essential information necessary for the selection of the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog. First he deals with the person of Archbishop Papp. As even the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches has indicated that the Archbishop is too old to assume governance of the Eparchy, his candidacy cannot be seriously counted with. He also hints at the fact that the Archbishop has a great many relatives in the Eparchy, posing a not insignificant obstacle to efficient governing. Relying on information from Gyula Czapik, he effectively excludes the Hajdúdorog Canons (László Sereghy, Sándor Mihalovics, István Bihon and Viktor Melles)¹⁴ from the category of eligible candidates. He also quotes Canon Czapik's words in describing the next two candidates, Miklós Dudás and Imre János Liki. In the way of a summary, he declares that, out of the Hungarian candidates, Miklós Dudás may be considered, to whom only his young age (only 35 at the time) might be raised as an objection.

5. Bishop Bazil Takách's candidature

However, as the candidate of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches was Bishop Bazil Takács, the Nuncio sought the opinion of Prince-Primate Serédi on him and also requested him to find out about the position of the Hungarian Government without mentioning the Congregation's intention. The Prince-Primate took no exception to the appointment of Bishop Takács. Moreover, he convinced the Minister of Culture that his name should be admitted to the Government's list.

¹⁴ He makes no mention of Arch-Provost Jenő Bánay.

The Nuncio gives an account of the private discussion with Bishop Lajos Shvoy as well. The Bishop of Székesfehérvár provided a positive characterisation of Bishop Takács, describing him as a zealous prelate faithful to Rome. He argues that his transfer to the See of Hajdúdorog would free him from the heavy cross that he must carry on his shoulders in his present place of service owing to opposition from the faithful and the priests. To his knowledge, Archbishop Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States already advised Bishop Takács of the plans of the Holy See during his trip to Washington. Shvoy opines that Miklós Dudás could be Bishop Takács's successor in the United States, where he currently performs popular missions.

All in all, the Nuncio takes the view that a principal expectation for the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog is to be truly faithful to Rome and dedicated, as well as to have the will to maintain friendly ties with the Latin Church. He narrows down the list of eligible candidates to Bishop Takács and Miklós Dudás. Rotta also attempts to answer the question how the faithful and the clergy of the Eparchy would receive the appointment of either candidate. Citing his sources, he declares that the priests and the faithful expect the appointment of Miklós Dudás and that they would receive it favourably. On the contrary, they do not even talk about the possible appointment of Bishop Takács. The latter would not be met with general approval, and he would need to do much to have himself accepted. The Nuncio also solicited Prince Primate Serédi for his opinion. He gave the not so flattering reply that the always complaining 'Greeks' would not receive either Bazil Takács or Miklós Dudás – or anyone else – in a favourable way.

In addition, the Nuncio indicates that the Holy See need not contemplate the danger of a schism. Thus, it is not to be feared that the clergy or part of the faithful will reject the bishop appointed by the Holy See and switch to Orthodoxy. If a candidate who is welcome by the Government is appointed, there will be no major impediments to his governing activity.

Nuncio Rotta closes his letter with the conclusion that the Holy See has complete freedom in its decision. The only request he makes is that the selection of the candidate should be communicated to him in due course so that he may forward the news to the Government, avoiding competent ministers receiving information about the decision from the press.

By the end of the year 1937, thus virtually everything was in place for a swift decision to be made. Nevertheless, the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog would not be appointed for more than a year. The main reason for the delay was the circumstance that word about Bishop Takács's candidacy spread in January 1938. In his letter cited above, Nuncio Rotta pointed out that Bishop Takács was not really counted with or talked about in Hungary. However, when the news was leaked – as Rotta alleged – from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the number one candidate of the Holy See was the prelate living in the United States, the Nunciature received information that, at first, made decision makers at the Vatican uncertain and, subsequently, convinced them that they should choose Miklós Dudás instead. In the archival materials of the Budapest Nunciature, two records appearing to be sufficient in themselves to explain the turn of events have been preserved from the start of 1938.

The first document is from Gyula Czapik, who, it seems, was the most important source of information on this issue for the Nunciature. The covering letter that speaks of an Italian translation of Czapik's Hungarian report is dated 11 January 1938. Therefore, it is likely that the Canon penned the document in the early days of the year. The next day, the Nuncio sent a notification about the content of the letter to Secretary of State Pacelli and Cardinal Tisserant.¹⁵ Gyula Czapik summarised the information he had acquired about Bishop Takács, whom he did not know personally, in seven points. Already in the first point, he

15 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 57, fasc. 1, fol. 9r-12v.

makes it clear that the Greek Catholic clergy consider the appointment of Bazil Takács as Bishop of Hajdúdorog, as well as of Dudás as Bishop for the United States so unlikely that his informants simply dismiss even the mere suggestion as a canard and believe it is impossible that Rome would do any such thing. Point 2 delineates perceptions of the candidate in Hungary: 'It is widely known here that Takács did not live up to the expectations in America'. This was not said of him by priests who had switched to Orthodoxy in America but by clerics who had remained Greek Catholic and were in intensive correspondence with their relatives in Hungary. These letters depict Bazil Takács as a bishop unable to govern, incapable of dealing with people and even bungling in his actions. One of Canon Czapik's informants even claims to know (Point 3) that, prior to his appointment as bishop, during his activities in Ungvár (Uzhhorod), Bazil Takács, as Director of the Episcopal Fund Management Office,¹⁶ was obliged to tolerate 'severe inquiries', on the details of which Archbishop Antal Papp, former Bishop of Munkács (Mukachevo) may supply more information. Information regarded as most serious by Czapik is contained in Points 4 and 5. The prevailing conviction among Hungarian Greek Catholics was that Bazil Takács's episcopal appointment had been enabled by his friendly relations with Czechoslovak President Masaryk. Seen as highly disadvantageous by the general public in Hungary, this information was complemented by the circumstance that Bishop Takács was a Czechoslovak citizen. In the final point of his letter, Point 7, even Canon Czapik emphasises that the 'Czechoslovak connection' represents a major drawback, making Bishop Takács vulnerable to attacks. In Point 6, he also mentions an episode from Bishop Takács's past, given great publicity in Hungary and vastly exaggerated by those opposing his appointment. A photograph of Bishop Takács, taken at a banquet organised in his honour, showing

16 He was Director of the Episcopal Fund Management Office of Munkács (Mukachevo) and Administrator of the Printing Press *Unió* from 1911.

the Bishop in the company of ‘half-naked girls’ was widely circulated. Even his ill-wishers would have been reluctant to allege that he made merry in the company of frivolous ladies, but he would be reproached for not being thoughtful enough to avoid the situation.

Nuncio Rotta forwarded Canon Czapik’s report almost word by word, subsequently presenting his position on each point. First, he comments on the scandalous photograph and qualifies the event as a mere ‘accident’, which may happen to anyone and in no way undermines the candidate’s morality. He refuses to express his views on Bazil Takács’s leadership skills, leaving the exploration of the issue to other organs of the Holy See. He would deem the problem of Bishop Takács’s Czechoslovak citizenship relevant if it were also objected to by the Hungarian Government. However, as the Government has given its approval to the appointment of Bishop Takács, the Nuncio considers the question of citizenship insignificant.

Rotta also reports that he has had the opportunity to exchange a few words about Bishop Takács with Prince-Primate Serédi as well. The Prince-Primate noted in advance that he did not know the candidate personally and could therefore not speak of his leadership skills or their absence. Serédi argues that the accusations against Bishop Takács ought not to be accorded much importance, either. He shared the Nuncio’s opinion that, for many (‘thank God, not all’) of the ‘Easterners’, truth was a rather relative concept and their conscience was not particularly troubled if they engaged in hyperbole, spread calumnies or simply invented things. The Prince-Primate also agreed with the Nuncio that the Hungarian Government would have made it known if the candidate’s Czechoslovak citizenship were to pose an impediment. He also confided to the Nuncio that, over the preceding days, he had received a few anonymous letters in which – as he supposed – the Hajdúdorog Canons eliminated one another as

potential candidates,¹⁷ but not a single indication had been supplied against Bishop Takács. Thus, the Nuncio draws the pragmatic conclusion that, notwithstanding his young age, Miklós Dudás appears to be the right candidate. Good-minded, vigorous and educated, he is preferred by the Government and is known and accepted by the clergy and the faithful alike. Should the Holy See nonetheless choose Bishop Takács, that would imply to the Nuncio that he is fit to govern the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog, which is in need of full spiritual renewal after a long period of torpor and neglect. Bishop Takács may expect massive resistance and little sympathy, but one need not be concerned about schism.

Secretary of State Pacelli thanked the Nuncio for the notification on 21 January.¹⁸ In his letter, he points to the fact that the Hungarian Government actively concerns itself with the question of succession. He ends his letter by expressing his hope that the pre-selected candidate, i.e. Bishop Takács, will be able to enlist the support of the clergy and the faithful of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog. This concluding sentence implies that, in spite of the apprehensions, the Holy See invariably continued to regard the transfer of Bishop Takács as the best solution.

A few days later, however, the case took a dramatically different direction. On 31 January 1938, Nuncio Rotta sent Cardinal Tisserant a solicitor's brief and a notarial act verifying its authenticity, accompanied by a short letter. The brief was from a woman by the name of Anna Males, who, in 1931, had commissioned Emil Neviczky, a lawyer living in the United States, to start a paternity suit against Bishop Bazil Takács. The woman claimed that her daughter called Mária was born of him. Although Takács, serving as a director of spiritual life at the time, had promised her to support her in raising the child, he did not

17 '...i Canonici di Hajdudorog, possibili candidati, pare si demoliscano caritatevolmente a vicenda...'
– the Nuntio quotes the Prince-Primate's words with a touch of irony (underlining the word *caritatevolmente*). AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 57, fasc. 1, 11r.

18 AAV Arch. Nunz. Ungheria, busta 57, fasc. 1, fol. 13r.

keep his promise. This was the reason why she decided to initiate proceedings for the declaration of parentage.

The Nuncio points out that the document, which he received as an anonymous letter, must have been uncovered by those seeking to prevent Bishop Bazil Takács's appointment as Bishop of Hajdúdorog. In fact, the brief was issued as early as 1931, while the notarial attestation was signed at the District Court of Ungvár on 20 January 1938. The document sent to the Nunciature amounted to more than mere rumour or calumny. The brief and the woman's claim are of course insufficient to establish the veracity of the accusation. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Bishop Takács's work in Hungary would have been considerably hindered by the repeated surfacing of documents about the paternity suit. It is by no means a far-fetched idea to posit that this record eventually played a decisive part in the Holy See's withdrawal of Bazil Takács's appointment as Bishop of Hajdúdorog and in its final decision in favour of Miklós Dudás.

6. The appointment of Miklós Dudás

At the same time, it is also clear that the working papers of the joint discussion of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs held on 20 March 1939¹⁹ did not contain this allegation. The document submitted to the decision makers emphasises that it would be inappropriate to transfer Bishop Takács, faithful to the Holy See, because that might be assessed as the victory of local factions opposed to Rome over the issue of married clergy. Albeit a completely legitimate argument, this point

19 Archivio della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali (=ACO) Bizantini – Hajdudorog 545/37. fol. 52/1-15. ACO Rutheni – Hajdudorog 192/57. fol. 53r-54v. & Archivio della Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati della Segreteria di Stato (=ASRS) S. Congregazione per gli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinarii (=AA.EE.SS.) Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Anno 1937-1959, pos. 76. fasc. 56. fol. 35r-36r.

was far from being a novelty: The possibility envisaged in it could be expected even when Bishop Takács's transfer was first considered.

Thus, the Cardinals of the two Dicastries were not faced with the question whether to choose Bazil Takács or Miklós Dudás as the new Bishop of Hajdúdorog but simply if the appointment of the latter would be possible. Answering the question was further aided by an additional set of incoming opinions, which were summarised by Cardinal Ermenegildo Pellegrinetti, who was put in charge of the case. Benedictine Abbot Neuzil Procopius, who headed a Russian Catholic mission at the Abbey of Lisle, Illinois, had a particularly positive opinion about Miklós Dudás's missionary tour in 1937-1938. The young monk was seen as fit for the episcopacy by his religious superior, Archimandrite Dionysius Dmytro Tkachuk, Superior General of the Basilian Order of St Josaphat, as well. He voiced concerns in no more than two areas. During his American missionary tour, the locals inferred from some of Miklós Dudás's remarks that he was supportive of the preservation of the institution of married clergy. This, however, was contrary to the ideas of the Holy See. His other worry was prompted by the candidate's 'excessive nationalism'. Also consulted on the matter, Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac, who had been a fellow seminarian of Miklós Dudás at the German-Hungarian College, shared this sentiment as well. Even then, he paid special attention to the Basilian seminarian, who conspicuously cherished his Hungarian identity, conducting services in Hungarian in the College Chapel as well despite the prevailing prohibitions issued by the Holy See. The Cardinal in charge of the case would dispel these concerns with the assistance of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Cardinal Tisserant indicated that he had discussed the worries about married clergy with the candidate in person and was reassured that the only priority for Miklós Dudás was to treat married clergy and their families tactfully and equitably in the course of the gradual introduction of obligatory celibacy. He did not voice any criticism

about the decision of the Holy See. Regarding the misgivings of the Archbishop of Zagreb (as well as, actually, of the Basilian Superior General), the Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches gently pointed out that Stepinac's expressions were also suggestive of a nationalistic approach, in connection with which a certain amount of scepticism was always acceptable. By using this polite wording, he meant to stress that whatever was felt by a Croat or Ukrainian to be an instance of excessive Hungarian nationalism might not even be noticed by an impartial observer. Cardinal Tisserant did not consider the use of the Hungarian liturgy as a major obstacle, either, as it would no longer be a source of scandal in post-Trianon Hungary.

The majority of the cardinals were convinced by these arguments; only Cardinal Francesco Marmaggi placed yet another hurdle to the appointment of Bishop Dudás. The former Bucharest and Prague Nuncio was not free from his earlier negative sentiments about Hungarians as a curial cardinal, either. He began his contribution by warning that the Hungarian Government ought not to have stated its opinion in the first place. Although Cardinal Secretary of State Luigi Maglione explained the essence of *intesa semplice* to him, that failed to pacify him. He proposed that Miklós Dudás's appointment be suspended as long as the opinion of Dionizie Nyárádi, Bishop of Kőrös (Kriş), whom he regarded as an absolute authority and who was widely known for his anti-Hungarian feelings, was received. Though only one of his fellow cardinals supported him in this move, Pope Pius XII finally opted for this arrangement on 25 March. He approved the recommendation of Miklós Dudás for the Episcopal See of Hajdúdorog, unless Bishop Nyárádi was to present a position thwarting it.

Bishop Nyárádi stayed in Rome at the time, so Cardinal Tisserant sought his opinion in person on 31 March.²⁰ Somewhat surprisingly,

20 AA.EE.SS. Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Anno 1937-1959, pos. 76. fasc. 56. fol. 34rv.

Bishop Nyárádi orally described the candidacy of Miklós Dudás as the ‘best possible choice’. At the same time, his position committed to writing on the same day does not reflect what he spoke about previously.²¹ His enthusiasm is nowhere to be found. He recalls Archbishop Stepinac’s concerns cited above about Miklós Dudás’s alleged nationalism, alludes to the fears of certain Basilians and emphasises that, in the event of his appointment as bishop, the Holy See is to issue clear and unmistakable directives for him concerning the liturgical use of the Hungarian language. Although Bishop Nyárádi did not explicitly state that he supported Miklós Dudás’s episcopal appointment, Cardinal Tisserant thought he did not offer any significant counter-arguments, either. Therefore, he asked Cardinal Secretary of State Luigi Maglione to take the steps necessary in such a situation and ensure that Basilian monk Miklós Dudás be appointed to the Episcopal See of Hajdúdorog.²²

The official machinery was set in motion, so much so that, on 6 April, Nuncio Rotta could report that Miklós Dudás had accepted appointment to the episcopacy. Aware ‘what a heavy cross was placed upon his shoulders’, he called the news of his appointment ‘an unwanted Easter present’.²³

7. Conclusion

In hindsight, it would be appropriate to say that he could not even suspect how heavy the cross of the episcopacy would become for him in reality. The trials and tribulations awaiting him as Bishop of Hajdúdorog during the years and decades following the World War seemed to reside in the realm of the inconceivable in 1939.

21 ACO Rutheni – Hajdudorog 192/57. fol. 59rv. AA.EE.SS. Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Anno 1937-1959, pos. 76. fasc. 56. fol. 37r.

22 AA.EE.SS. Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Anno 1937-1959, pos. 76. fasc. 56. fol. 34rv.

23 AA.EE.SS. Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Anno 1939-1948, pos. 81. fol. 76r-77r.

When the hard times came, it proved to be a decisive factor that the Hungarian Greek Catholic community was led by a young and firm bishop. The circumstances of Bishop Dudás's appointment in 1939 are rendered particularly meaningful by the fact that, in 1948, his 'rival', Bishop Bazil Takács, died of a serious illness in the United States at the age of 69 – at a time when the Communist regime composed the scenario for the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church in Hungary. It would be no exaggeration to suppose that the Communist regime would have easily accomplished the abolition of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, had the Episcopal See of Hajdúdorog been vacant in those years.²⁴

Abstract

Quando István Miklósy, vescovo di Hajdúdorog (1913-1937), morì nelle prime ore del 29 ottobre 1937, la considerazione principale sulla nomina del suo successore era l'aspettativa che il nuovo vescovo non solo fosse energico ma anche aperto a compromessi, una qualità inevitabile sia per la sopravvivenza nel mondo della politica che per la cooperazione con i vescovi di rito latino. Sulla base dei documenti conservati negli archivi della Santa Sede, vorrei presentare in questo breve saggio il processo che nel marzo del 1939 ha portato alla nomina del giovane monaco basiliano, Miklós Dudás – dopo un anno e mezzo di trattative e spiacevoli sorprese.

²⁴ Translated by Dávid Veljanovszki.



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