

PHD DISSERTATION
THESIS

BALÁZS CZETZ

**HISTORY OF FEJÉR COUNTY IN THE LIGHT OF
THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS' PARTY
DOCUMENTATION
1948–1953**

University of Miskolc Faculty of Art
Doctoral School of Literature

2010

As a consequence of the merger of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP) was formed on 12th June, 1948. Marxism-Leninism and building socialism were pinpointed to be the ideological statues and the aim of the party. Until the termination of HWP at the end of October, it operated as state party and had a determining role in the Communist transformation or transformation attempt of the state. Although not officially stated, the public administrative structure and the party structure existed and operated parallelly, out of which the latter had greater power. The more significant decisions were almost exclusively made by the party. During its operation, the HWP merged party positions, positions in mass organizations, trade unions and public administration into a body of power concentration. There were no aspects of life where party resolutions, directives were not valid. The decisions affecting the economic, social and cultural spheres were made principally by the party, or at least demanded party confirmation, and in this way it functioned as an organization above the frames of jurisdiction. The determining members of legislation (and decree legislation on local level) were leading bodies of the party and the apparatus. In this way the political system was not state-centered but rather party-centered, where the power was focused monopolistically in the hands of a single party, in the hands of HWP.

Party membership was an indispensable condition to fill important and confidential positions in that period. HWP was thus present in the life of people on a daily level. The life of individuals was basically influenced by the decisions of the state and local party leadership. The party did not only determine the political structure, the industrial investments, the socialist transformation of the agriculture, but also had a great influence on the culture, civilization and education, and even in the sphere of sport. The organization of congress work contests, peace loan subscriptions, collective farms organization, the Stahonovist movement are also attached to the activity of HWP also as show trials, armament beyond capability, aggressive transformation of the society, economy and culture. Despite the fact that HWP had such a determining role in life of Hungary, the processing of the party's real history is still to come. This is especially true for Fejér county, where the study researching the history of Fejér County Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party is still not published. Neither did the exhibition nor the publication of sources start. Names and data are missing which

would help getting to know the period more deeply. Thus it is no wonder that the history, operation, scope of authority of HWP local organization are unknown, we are not aware of persons filling the important positions of the county, we do know neither their records nor the duration of their activities. But with the help of the party documents it would be possible to trace back, for example, the industrial politics, industrial development, the aggressive Socialist transformation of agriculture, the investments and trade of the county as well as the theoretical, practical and methodological questions of the party direction of mass organizations, the relation between politics and economy, party and administration, local enforcement of resolutions made by upper bodies on economic questions, or just the relation of the Catholic Church and the Communist Party.

Recognizing all this, the aim I had set when working on the dissertation is to draft the history of the county of the given period relying on the party documentation and to make those data still missing today available for public without which the Rákosi era, the following Revolution of 1956, Kádár era are not interpretable or can be interpreted just with difficulties.

Accordingly, my aim was to make the today less known or even unknown documents about the events and processes of county available not only for professionals but for all those interested in the history of the county. The completed study can without doubt fill discrepancy resolving part, as neither the monographic process of the period and area happened so far, nor was a similar volume sourcebook revealed.

The basis of selection were the documents of HWP Fejér County Committee and committees of townships and towns, but the priority was given to the documents of the county committee while the documents of the townships and towns were only secondary.

Apart from the documents, another important part of the source collection is the introductory study which was prepared primarily with the use of documents and other publicized studies of the county administration. My target was a summary of public and party history where the emphasis is put on the events not processed or not reported without political crosstalk yet.

Applying chronological and thematic aspects in the study, I have presented the county events, administration changes, representatives and council elections, the industrial, agricultural and public supply situation, the relation of the church – with emphasis on the Catholic church – and the Communist party, and last but not least the history of HWP party committee.

The introductory study records the strand of events when the front broke into Fejér county and although very briefly, but it reviews the Second World War destruction in the county, loss of certain institutions, local aspect of impeachment following the “world burning”, deportation and displacement, consequences of land reform, personal and administrative changes. Although the period between 1945 and 1948 is beyond the period discussed in the document volume, for a better understanding of the background events, I feel justified to draft the period after the world war of Fejér county, as the events happening and people appearing at that time show a continuation in all cases with the series of events and people after the turn.

The next, bigger thematic unit (with the title *From party union till the resolution of June*) includes a few subsections and it discusses the county history primarily from an administrative, public supply and political-historical aspect starting from the union of the Party of Hungarian Coalition and the Social Democratic Party until the resolution made in June. Beside the two parliament elections of the period, the Rajk-case and its local echos, this part presents administration, process of county system transformation and council election. A separate subsection deals with public supply, plan and peace loan subscriptions and their county impact. Finally, Mátyás Rákosi’s 60th birthday and its local celebration, the circumstances and results of the changes of 1953 are discussed.

The following section with the title *industry and agriculture* does not studiously aim to present the topic thoroughly, as neither the volume limits, nor the original aim of the dissertation allow this. The industry and agriculture of Fejér county has gone through such a fundamental transformation in the period (it is enough to refer to Stalin town investment, where beside the establishment of iron metallurgy, a new town was built) that it would provide a topic for a separate dissertation. Nevertheless, the topic cannot be bypassed without comments as these events have brought radical changes not only in economic terms, but have transformed Fejér county in social, political aspect

and even their impact (with the problems generated then) can be felt today. Therefore, this section presents a draft of greater industrial investments, and rather focuses on the party and economic policy, and presents the social influence of HWP misguided industrial policy (women labour, question of work discipline, Stahanovist movement, etc.).

I analyzed primarily the topics of farmer's cooperative organization (consolidation of land holdings), compulsory collections and deliveries, the kulak question (providing the county and township data here) in this question as these are the events that caused the greatest changes (and sufferings) for the nation living from agriculture in that period. At the end of the section, the flopped experiment of growing non-native industrial plants (cotton, rice, etc.) is also mentioned.

The next bigger thematic section presents the stressful relation of the Catholic Church and the Communist party. The visit of József Mindszenty to Bodajk in Fejér county in 1948 is presented, as well as the school nationalization and its circumstances, county operation of the State Office or Church Affairs, impact and issues of the "agreement" between the church and the state. The approach and process of the topic is mostly based on the party and administration documents, therefore the question is primarily shown from the viewpoint of the party as power owner. It is a fact that the topic has not been researched so far, and that HWP and the administration documents have not been processed for such a purpose locally, accordingly the study has great significance and surely provides a great help or those interested in the topic. When reviewing the question, I relied on the published reminiscences of the county bishop, Lajos Shvoy.

The one but last section of the introductory study (with the title *HWP organization history and youth movements*) presents the history of fond body, organization structure and its change, cadre situation, greater officials (county secretaries), and the changes in these. It follows the structural formation of HWP county party committee after the merger, reports on changes of the party membership number and county operation of youth organizations (Association of Working Youth, Pioneers' movement).

Finally, in the last section I review the consequences of the Central Leadership resolution of June 27-28 and speech of Imre Nagy of July 4, where apart from their

economic and social influence, a great attention is given to their influence on the county party committee and work. The introductory study is closed by a summary.

The study is followed by the documents of Fejér county HWP and a part with the title “aspects of source publication” with which I review the “story” of the HWP county documents in the period after 1956 which is undoubtedly adventurous and not insignificant at all. Here I discuss the process and methodology (which can provide data for those wanting to make research in the documents) of the arrangement of the previous decades. Furthermore, I present here a picture of the aspects applied during the source publication.

Apart from the introductory study and documentation, a biographical data archive is also a part of the dissertation, which is in its way significant as well. In this data archive, the biographical information of important people appearing in the volume is found.

The biographical data archive is followed by an appendix where among others I clarify the abbreviations of the volume.

The dissertation tries to give a picture of the events in Fejér county in the Rákosi era by showing the sources in their original form and thus providing opportunity to everybody to analyze, interpret and use these. All those aids (footnotes, introductory study, biographical data archive) I tried to present with this study do not substitute, just – hopefully – make the resource analyzing work easier.

Publications connected to the topic of the dissertation

1. *Szénbányászok munkakörülményei és a munkafegyelem kérdése az első ötéves terv idején.* In: Illésné Kovács Mária (szerk.): Miskolci Egyetem Doktoranduszok Fóruma. Miskolc, 2005.
2. „*Motoros papok tömege lepte el a megyét*” *Fejezetek a klerikális reakció elleni harc Fejér megyei történetéből.* In: Archivnet. 5. évfolyam 5. szám. <http://www.archivnet.hu/>
3. *Az MDP Fejér megyei dokumentumainak kritikai kiadása.* In: Szentirmai Dóra (szerk.): Miskolci Egyetem Doktoranduszok Fóruma. Miskolc, 2006.
4. *A katolikus egyház és a kommunista párt viszonya Fejér megyében 1948.* In: Czetz Balázs–Szűts István Gegely (szerk.): A jelenkortörténet útjai 1. Politika és társadalom. Miskolc, 2006.
5. *Egy katolikus pap a kommunizmus bűvöletében. Szittyay Dénes (1887–1957).* In: Búzás Aranka (szerk.): Miskolci Egyetem Doktoranduszok Fóruma, Miskolc, 2008.
6. „*Szerencse fel! Szerencse le! Ilyen a bányász élete.*” *A kisgyón-balinkai bányászok élet- és munkakörülményei az '50-es években.* In: Czetz Balázs–Kunt Gergely (szerk.): A jelenkortörténet útjai 2. Politika és hétköznapiak. Miskolc, 2007.
7. *Mindszenty Bodajkon.* In: Egyháztörténeti szemle, 2008. 1. szám.
8. *"Ígéretekből nem lesz demokrácia!" Dokumentumok Fejér megye történetének tanulmányozásához, 1945-1948.* Székesfehérvár, 2009.
9. *Fejér megye és közigazgatása 1945.* In: Comitatus. 20. évf. 189. szám.
10. *The Organization History of the Hungarian Workers' Party in Fejér County from the Establishment to the Second Congress.* In: 5th International Conference of PhD Students. University of Miskolc, Hungary 14–20 August 2005. Published by University of Miskolc Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre. 2005.
11. *The Relationship between the Catholic Church and the Communist Party on Hungary 1945–1948.* In: Power and Culture, Identity, Ideology, Representation. Pisa University Press. 2007.