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CONTINUITY AND UNIVERSITY TRADITION IN KOŠICE IN THE PERIOD 1777–1922*

Abstract

After the abolishment of the University of Košice in 1777, higher education in Košice was represented by the Košice Academy until its closing in 1922. At that time, the representative bodies of the city and the local population sought to raise the Academy to the level of a university. In the case of adverse political circumstances, they strove to hinder the attempts to abolish the Academy in Košice. The main reason was the prestige of Košice as a university city, while the Academy preserved this tradition.

Key Words: Košice, Law Academy, 19th century, University of Košice, education.

Słowa kluczowe: Koszyce, Szkoła Prawna, XIX wiek, uniwersytet w Koszycach, szkolnictwo.

The Royal Law Academy in Košice¹ followed up to the University of Košice (Universitas Cassoviensis). The University of Košice was founded in 1657, and

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¹ Information on the history of the Košice Academy can be found in the following papers: Joannes N. Plath, *Annales Universitatis Superioris Hungariae nunc Regiae Academiae Cassoviensis* (manuscript, 1845), p. 184. István Rösler, “Adalékok a kassai kir. jogakadémia könyvtárához,” *Magyar Könyv-Szemle* (1882), pp. 1–30. Róbert Farkas, *A kassai kath. főgymnasium története 1657–1895*, Kassa: Ries Lajos Könyv- és Könyvómó-Intézet, 1895, p. 426. Eugen Saból, “Z minulosti knižnice bývalej právnickej akadémie v Košiciach,” [in:] *Knižnice na Slovensku*, ed. Jozef Kuzmík et al., Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1954, pp. 108–110. Ondrej R. Halaša, “Z dejín Košickej univerzity,” *Historický časopis* 4 (1956, 4), pp. 521–535. Michal Poteš, “Dejiny univerzitnej knižnice v Košiciach,” [in:] *Z minulosti knihy na Slovensku*, ed. Boris Bálent et al., Martin: Matica slovenská, 1959, pp. 173–209. Martin Vietor, “Die rechtswissenschaftliche Akademie in Košice bis zum Jahre 1848,” [in:] *Die juristische Bildung in der Slowakei und Ungarn bis zum J. 1848: Acta facultatis juridicae Universitatis Comenianae*, ed. Martin Vietor et al., Bratislava: SPN, 1968, pp. 319–340. Michal Poteš, “Právnická akadémia

after the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, it was transformed into an Episcopal University (Universitas Cassoviensis Episcopalis) with a Faculty of Theology and a Faculty of Philosophy.² In 1777, the education reform under Maria Theresa transformed the university into the Royal University (Regia Academia) with a two-year Law Faculty and Philosophical Faculty.³ The amended Ratio Educationis of 1806 separated the academy from the gymnasium.⁴ Another significant change was brought by the reform of 1850, which transformed the Royal Academy into the Imperial and Royal Law Academy (Caesareo-regia Iuris Academia).⁵ The Academy thus lost the Faculty of Philosophy, which was added to the Gymnasium as an additional two grades. In 1855, the two-year study at the Law Academy was extended to three years. Additional amendments pertaining to the Academy were issued in 1861 and 1867. In 1872, the second university in Hungary was founded in Cluj while the third was founded in Zagreb by the transformation of the Law Academy in 1874. In 1874, the law academies were renamed as the Faculties of Legal and Political Science with a four-year study programme.⁶

The initially negative attitude of the city towards the foundation of a Jesuit university changed to a positive one after the Catholics gained the upper hand in

v Košiciach v rokoch 1848–1922,” *Slovenská archivistika* 8 (1973), pp. 57–89. Peter Zubko, “Knižnica Košickej univerzity,” [in:] 340. výročie kráľovského potvrdenia Košickej univerzity, ed. Peter Sedlák et al., Prešov: VMV, 2000, pp. 86–96.

The history of the Košice Academy was also a part of more general syntheses on the history of education as well as of papers dedicated to other topics: Vladislav Ružička, *Školstvo na Slovensku v období neskorého feudalizmu (po 70-te roky 18. storočia)*, Bratislava: SPN, 1974, p. 416. Imrich Sedlák et al., *Prešovské kolégium v slovenských dejinách*, Bratislava: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo v Košiciach, 1967, p. 365.

For the historical context and cultural and political conditions in Košice see: Michal Potemra, “Školská politika maďarských vlád na Slovensku na rozhraní 19. a 20. stor.,” *Historický časopis* 26 (1978, 4), pp. 497–536. Michal Potemra, *Politický život v Košiciach 1848–1900: Tematická bibliografia*, Košice: ŠVK, 1983, p. 526. Michal Potemra, *Školstvo na Slovensku v rokoch 1901–1918*, Košice: ŠVK, 1990, p. 584. Nikola Regináčová and Ladislav Gergely, “Obyvateľstvo Košíc a administratívne členenie mesta v 19. storočí v archívnych dokumentoch a literatúre,” *Človek a spoločnosť* 14 (2011, 2) [cit. 6.9.2013]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.saske.sk/cas/public/media/5932/Gergely-Reginacova.pdf>

² J.N. P l a t h, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–62.

³ *Ratio educationis totiusque rei literariae per Regnum Hungariae et provincias eidem adnexas. Tomus I*, Vindobonae: Typis Joan. Thom. nob. de Trattner, 1777, pp. 276–280.

⁴ *Ratio educationis publicae totiusque rei literariae per regnum hungariae et provincias eidem adnexas*, Budae: Typ. et Sumtibus Regiae Univer. Hungaricae, 1806, pp. 82–95.

It was not possible to continue with the studies at the university without completing the philosophical course at the academy. František Bok es, “Rozvoj vyššieho školstva na Slovensku v 17.–19. storočí,” [in:] *Prešovské kolégium v slovenských dejinách*, ed. Imrich Sedlák et al., Bratislava: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo v Košiciach, 1967, p. 22.

⁵ Slovenský národný archív v Bratislave (Slovak National Archive in Bratislava), collection Kráľovská právnická akadémia v Košiciach (1791–1923) (Royal Law Academy in Košice (1791–1923)), box 1, doc. no. 4.

⁶ R. F a r k a s, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–85. M. Potemra, “Právnická academia...,” pp. 57–58, 60–62.

the city. The degradation of the university in Košice to an academy did not bring about great resistance by the municipality. The city of Košice was entrusted by the Vice-Regency Council with establishing a commission for the inventory and take-over of the property of the suppressed Society of Jesus in Košice in 1773. The situation recurred one year later in case of the Academy Library.⁷ This official act confirmed not only the control function of the municipality in this matter, but, at the same time, the connection between the university and the city was respected as well. Otherwise, the Vice-Regency Council would have entrusted this task to one of the state authorities in this domain. The reason for the calm acceptance of this fact by the city was the ensured continuity of higher education in the city after 1773 and 1777. At the Academy, a similar number of students were taught by the original faculty on the same premises as before at the University.

Initially, the change of status was only formal, but it gained in substance over time. One of the reasons was the increasing number of Hungarian universities and academies in the 19th century, which caused an inflation of higher education and the decline in the social prestige of study at the academies. This state was also reflected in the above-mentioned reforms of academic education, which accentuated the exclusiveness of university study. The academies became half-gymnasiums and half-universities, but they were still considered higher education institutions until their extinction. The study of law at the Academy (as well as at university) took four years, but the university considered it equivalent to a two-year study programme at the university.⁸ Professors at the Faculty of Law at the Comenius University in Bratislava were of a similar opinion as well, as they deemed the Košice Academy a higher education institution, but definitely did not consider it equivalent to the university mainly due to the absence of scientific activity from among its professors.⁹

Graduates of the Košice Academy could be employed in public administration authorities, where their education was accepted as tertiary education. However, the Academy lost the right of graduation and was not allowed to award academic degrees, but graduates could take the state examination on its grounds. Following the state examination, graduates were authorised to hold public judgeships or perform advocacy work. They could become doctors of law or doctors of political science only upon the completion of university studies. The reform of academy organisation of 1874 brought the Academy closer to the university, as it was given a curriculum similar to the one at the Faculty of Law at the university.

The city responded to the mentioned decline in the status of academies in Hungary with an effort to retransform the Academy to a university starting in

⁷ M. P o t e m r a, "Dejiny univerzitetnej...", p. 180.

⁸ M. P o t e m r a, "Právnická akadémia...", p. 58.

⁹ Archív Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave (hereinafter AUK), collection (f.) Maďarská právnická akadémia v Košiciach 1923–1933 (Hungarian Law Academy in Košice 1923–1933), file Akadémia právnická v Košiciach (Law Academy in Košice).

the 1870s. This effort would occur sporadically until the end of the monarchy in 1918, but was never successful. It is symptomatic that it was happening exactly since that time, as it was when the exclusive status of the University of Buda became challenged by the foundation of two other universities. The example of Zagreb and later also Bratislava showed that the Law Academy was really a starting point for its transformation into a university. In Bratislava, the conditions were prepared gradually by reopening a three-year philosophy course as its part in 1875. The course was of a higher quality (grade) than at gymnasiums, and was to become the Faculty of Philosophy and the foundation for a new Hungarian university, which was to be in Bratislava this time. The faculty of the Bratislava Academy had endeavoured to transform it into a university already since 1876.¹⁰

The Košice Academy represented a continuity with the University not only in terms of personnel, but also materially. The Academy was the successor of the University. It took over its property, including the management of the University Church. The original Jesuit College, including a Jesuit grammar school, was taken over by the Premonstratensians. A delimitation of the property thus had to take place between the Academy and the Gymnasium, which most obviously affected the Academy Library. This dispute dragged on until the mid-19th century, when the Austrian authorities finally awarded the library to the Academy in 1855. It happened thus with a reference to and on the basis of its legal continuity with the University, which was an argument that the Academy itself as well indeed.¹¹

We can also speak of continuity in the case of the quality and scope of education and its focus, which was changing gradually and completely throughout the kingdom. Continuity also existed in case of the faculty, which remained largely the same and changed only in a natural manner. Likewise, there was also no exodus of students neither upon the transformation into the Academy, nor afterwards.

Students from the sub-region of Upper Hungary, the centre of which was Košice, came to the Academy. It was also supported by the division of Hungary into five school districts. The fluctuation between Košice and Bratislava was very low, but, on the contrary, it was very high between Košice and the area of Subcarpathia and Transylvania. The low number of foreign students at the royal Hungarian academies confirmed their status as lower higher education institutions that did not provide the full tertiary education.¹² Undisturbed study at the academies was already allowed for non-Catholics by Ratio Educationis of 1777.

¹⁰ F. B o k e s, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24, 35.

¹¹ M. P o t e m r a, “Dejiny univerzitnej...,” p. 188.

¹² A total of 19 Serbian students studied at the Košice Academy as well, which is a very low number, as more than 2,300 Serbians studied at higher schools on the territory of Slovakia from the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, who preferred schools in Bratislava, Kežmarok, Prešov and elsewhere to Košice. It was similar also with other nations of the former Yugoslavia, including the Croats and the Slovenes. Risto K o v i j a n o v i ć, “Štúdium srbských študentov na Slovensku v 18.–19. storočí,” [in:] *Prešovské kolégium v slovenských dejinách*, ed. Imrich Sedlák et al., Bratislava: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo v Košiciach, 1967, pp. 131–132.

In spite of the fact that Joseph II emphasised this specifically, more than 80 per cent of students were Catholics and the Košice Academy retained its Catholic nature until its abolishment.¹³ Catholic rites accompanied all major events of academic life and were usually connected with the Academy Church as well. The Academy also referred to the University of Košice in a symbolic way by the use of the old university insignia until the beginning of the 19th century. It was observed that they were carried by the Academy's representatives during the inauguration of the first Košice bishop in 1804.¹⁴

In the case of tradition, this relationship to the University concerns the city of Košice and Hungarian society as a whole, while in case of the institution itself we are speaking of the continuity of the University. The tradition of Košice as a university city persisted in this respect. In the case of Košice itself, this tradition was perceived even more intensely indeed. Paradoxically, the city resisted the establishment of the University at the time of its foundation for religious reasons. Over time, the religious aspect was no longer an obstacle and the University enhanced the prestige of the city. There is a great deal of evidence of both institutional and personal favour on the part of the city's society. Support was broad, and the city was accommodating towards the University. Since the Academy provided the city with the status of a university city only in half, the foundation of a university in Košice was considered at the national level specifically due to this tradition since the end of the 19th century. The law academies themselves represented a provisional solution, which is why they were subject to various school reforms so often. On the other hand, there was no interest on the part of the state to transform all of them into universities due to their relatively high number (there initially were five in 1777 and the number grew continuously during the 19th century).

Along with the effort to gain a university, Košice paradoxically faced pressure to abolish the Academy at the end of the 19th century as well. The reason was the above-mentioned high number of academies in Hungary, which the government wished to reduce. Košice was thus forced to invest in the construction of a new academy building (1894) to sustain its legitimacy and continuation in the city. It shows the enormous endeavour by the city to maintain and elevate the highest school institution in the city. This manifested itself, enriched with political and national elements, after the breakup of the monarchy in 1918 as well. Reasons for this effort included economic benefits, more accessible tertiary education for the local population, the intellectual and cultural contributions of the professors, the shaping of the city's culture by professors and students into the distinctive culture of a university city, and the prestige of the city. These aspects manifested themselves in an obvious manner in case of Košice several times in the first two decades of the 20th century.

¹³ Veronika Novák, *A Pozsonyi Jogakadémia hallgatósága 1777–1849*, Budapest: MTAEA, 2007, p. 651.

¹⁴ O.R. Halaga, *op. cit.*, p. 534.

In the first decade of the 20th century, Košice fought to acquire a new Hungarian university. Thus, they followed up to the long-time effort dating back to the 1870s, when the establishment of new universities was really considered for the first time. All the mentioned aspects clearly showed in this effort. The noblest ones were among the arguments of Košice, while the more acquisitive ones were among the arguments of the opponents. All the cities that strove to acquire the university used more or less similar arguments: sufficient material provision, a tradition of higher or university education, a central position in the region, the importance of the city in Hungarian history, and an environment that was most required for spreading Hungarian culture. The economic aspect prevailed considerably in this regard. The most significant was the number of students at the academy, and thus in the city as well, and the expenses “the scholars would expend there to lighten the pockets of their parents”. The linguist Samuel Czambel derisively and ironically reproached this fact to all the cities applying for the university. He and all of the opponents of enlarging the number of universities alike pointed out the number of law graduates and jurists in Hungary, which was already high at that time. This opinion was also held by the Ministry of Education for a long time until the end of the 19th century, but it changed its mind probably on political grounds in the early 20th century. Besides the Agricultural Academy in Košice (elevated to the higher education institution level in 1906) attended by up to 150 students in the early 20th century, the Academy in Košice was usually attended by up to 100 students by the end of 19th century. In 1900–1914, it was up to 200 students. The period 1914–1918 was specific, as the number of students increased dramatically up to 545 by the 1918–1919 school year.¹⁵

This increase was influenced by the political decisions of the Hungarian government, which supported the study of army officers as a satisfaction for the service to the homeland in war. Time spent in the army was recognised as equivalent to study at the academy. Officers thus could graduate from the law academy in a shorter time. The Czechoslovak Ministry of Education together with the Faculty of Law of the Comenius University in Bratislava had to cope with this issue later,¹⁶ as it was addressed by the graduates of the Košice Academy with an application to issue a leaving certificate. Those applications were generally accepted on the condition of completing a special term at the Faculty of Law of the University of Bratislava.¹⁷

In addition to the city, the academy professors themselves were highly interested in raising the academy to the university level, as their status and salaries would

¹⁵ M. P o t e m r a, *Školstvo na Slovensku...*, pp. 535–542, 554.

¹⁶ The Faculty of Law of Comenius University was charged with keeping the records of the extinct university by the decision of the Czechoslovak government. AUK, f. Maďarská právnická akadémia v Košiciach 1923–1933 (Hungarian Law Academy in Košice 1923–1933), file Akadémia právnická v Košiciach (Law Academy in Košice).

¹⁷ AUK, f. Maďarská právnická akadémia v Košiciach 1923–1933 (Hungarian Law Academy in Košice 1923–33), file volume 1933/1934.

improve *en bloc*. This fact was also mentioned by the ironic lawyer Ivan Dérer, later a significant Czechoslovak politician. It was manifested by the example of the Bratislava Academy, where several professors from the Košice Academy also transferred. The transformation of both higher education institutions in Košice into the faculties of the new university was also beneficial for the professors, but the government did not adopt this concept either in the end.

Like other cities, Košice also sought to gain support for the new university from the counties. This effort was successful, and Košice was supported by the 14 surrounding counties.¹⁸ Košice offered the material provision for the university worth 8 million korunas. The final decision in favour of Bratislava and Debrecen in 1912 brought great disappointment and caused a major exodus of professors, with three of them transferring straight to the new university in Bratislava. At the given time, the law academies were perceived as a highly efficient tool of Hungarianisation in terms of the Slovak issue. It was also supported by a very low number of students who spoke the Slovak language in all three law academies in Bratislava, Prešov and specifically in Košice. Their number was close to zero. This state culminated at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. This matter also became a subject of reasoning of all the cities applying for the new university.¹⁹

All of the cities reasoned that they were situated on an ethnic border of the Hungarian nation in Hungary, whose border areas needed to be Hungarianised in a civilised manner through such an institution. Paradoxically, Košice was not deemed a Hungarian city in “the Hungarian cultural circles”. Hence, a university was not supposed to be established there. An intention to name the university after Francis II Rákóczi did not help either (1906).²⁰

After the foundation of Czechoslovakia, both the academies and the University of Bratislava were abolished on historical grounds. In this period, the higher education institutions paid for enforcing the non-academic interests, while the Comenius University itself, which was established on the foundations of the Elisabeth University, also enforced political goals and became an exponent of the government’s agenda of Czechoslovakism.

As a result of the events of 1918, the municipality of Košice tried to salvage at least its the status quo – the further existence of the Košice Academy. In the 1920s, we can see a great rise of the Košice society, which was reflected in a concentrated endeavour of the city’s representing bodies to: 1. retain the Košice Academy, 2. keep the Academy Library in Košice, 3. transform the Košice Academy into a Slovak school and 4. found a university in Košice. Here, we can observe that local patriotism was stronger than nationalism, as it united the nationalities in

¹⁸ Besides Košice, Liptov County supported Bratislava as well.

¹⁹ M. P o t e m r a, *Školstvo na Slovensku...*, pp. 541–550. This school policy of the Hungarian governments was the most successful in this aspect in the case of the eastern counties of today’s Slovakia. M. P o t e m r a, “Školská politika...,” p. 506.

²⁰ M. P o t e m r a, *Školstvo na Slovensku...*, pp. 549–550.

Košice in this effort. The Academy had probably never before received so much attention by the media and been so cared for by the municipality as at that time.

In spite of that, the Košice Law Academy was abolished as of 31 July 1922. Its students could continue their studies at the Faculty of Law of the Comenius University in Bratislava, namely under Government Regulation No. 276/1921 Coll. By then, the Academy was also attended by students of the abolished Law Academy in Prešov, which was attended by more students (200–300)²¹ than the Law Academy in Košice or in Bratislava. It was officially transferred to Miskolc, but a portion of students decided to continue with their studies in Košice. According to the contemporary comments, the quality of study decreased considerably and the conditions for passing examinations were eased. The Academy allowed a very high number of students to complete their studies under very easy conditions, as it was aware of its upcoming abolishment.²²

Peter Fedorčák

CIĄGŁOŚĆ I TRADYCJE UNIWERSYTECKIE W KOSZYCACH W LATACH 1777–1922

Streszczenie

Królewska Akademia w Koszycach ufundowana została w 1777 roku w miejsce uniwersytetu (*Universitas Cassoviensis*), który założony został w 1657 roku. Pierwotnie negatywny stosunek do szkoły prowadzonej przez jezuitów zmieniał się w miarę katolicyzacji miasta. Samo obniżenie rangi szkoły z uniwersytetu do poziomu akademii nie spowodowało znaczących przeszkód i protestów w mieście, gdyż istnienie akademii gwarantowało ciągłość wyższego wykształcenia po likwidacji zakonu jezuitów w 1773 i zmianach roku 1777. Zresztą w początkowej fazie funkcjonowania akademii zmiany były symboliczne, gdyż pozyskała ona kadre i majątek po poprzednicze. W późniejszym okresie prestiż akademii uległ obniżeniu w związku z powstaniem nowych uniwersytetów na Węgrzech w XIX wieku. Miasto zareagowało próbami ponownego podniesienia szkoły do rangi uniwersytetu w latach siedemdziesiątych XIX wieku, co jednak nie przyniosło pożądanych skutków do upadku monarchii w 1918 roku. Po powstaniu Czechosłowacji akademia została zlikwidowana 31 lipca 1922 roku.

²¹ M. Potemra, *Školstvo na Slovensku...*, pp. 554–555.

²² AUK, f. Maďarská právnická akadémia v Košiciach 1923–1933 (Hungarian Law Academy in Košice), file Akadémia právnická v Košiciach (Law Academy in Košice). M. Potemra, “Právnická akadémia...” p. 83.