

# Hungarian martyrs of the Church of the Faith

## III.

Edited by:

Cyntia Kálmán – Attila Petheő – Ferenc Tömösközi



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**Hungarian martyrs of the Church of the Faith III.**



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J. Selye University Faculty of Reformed Theology

**Lectures / Odborní lektor:**

**Prof. Vilmos József Kolumbán**  
**Dr. Bálint Pető**

**English language lektor**  
**Cyntia Kálmán**



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# IBOLYA SZAMBOROVSZKY-NAGY<sup>311</sup>

## THE LIFE PATH AND MARTYRDOM OF IMRE NARANCSIK, THE PASTOR OF NAGYMUZSALY

Imre Narancsik's life and martyrdom rarely become the focus of scholarly research, despite his public activities – conducted up until the Soviet occupation in 1944 – being almost unparalleled. His name, however, remains relatively unknown due to his painfully early death. Our goal is precisely derived from this: to systematically and chronologically uncover his life path – even if in outline – while thoroughly exploring his activities as a pastor, public writer, editor, and historian of science, based on contemporary sources and documents.

The research on Imre Narancsik's life journey is quite limited. Until now, only one major study has been published, in which the authors first attempted to compile his biography and outline the breadth of his activities.<sup>312</sup> Following this, a collection associated with the name of Gusztáv Fodor was published, which provided an excerpted selection from the court documents of the Stalinist show trials against Reformed pastors in Transcarpathia.<sup>313</sup> The most recent scholarly work dedicated to Narancsik (in article format) was published by the author of these lines in the RefWiki online Reformed church and cultural history encyclopedia.<sup>314</sup> As is apparent, the life of the late pastor has not been extensively researched, which is why this research project was born. We want to bring to life the exemplary life journey of our Reformed predecessors, including Imre Narancsik, who was a model in many ways. Furthermore, we aim to highlight the multifaceted activities he undertook as a pastor and as a person living in a minority context, while

<sup>311</sup> PhDr, historian, associate professor, Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, Department of History and Social Sciences, Beregszász/Berehove, Ukraine.

<sup>312</sup> Fodor Gusztáv, Fodor Krisztina, Szabadi István, Szamborovszkyné Nagy Ibolya: *Narancsik Imre, a tudós lelkész, próféta és mártír*. NIKM, Beregszász-Debrecen, 2015.

<sup>313</sup> Narancsik Imre lelkész 1891–1948, in: Fodor, Gusztáv: *Akik a nagy nyomorúságból jöttek. A sztálini diktatúra koncepciós perei kárpátaljai református lelkészek ellen a KGB ungvári levéltárának dokumentumai alapján. Peranyagok, életrajzi adatok, fényképek*. KRE – RKKKA, h.n., 2017. 90–117.

<sup>314</sup> Szamborovszkyné Nagy, Ibolya: Narancsik Imre (1904–1948), In: Földváryné, Kiss Réka (ed.): *RefWiki: Református Online Enciklopédia*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2023. Available: [https://refwiki.kre.hu/index.php?title=Narancsik\\_Imre\\_\(1904%E2%80%9931948\)](https://refwiki.kre.hu/index.php?title=Narancsik_Imre_(1904%E2%80%9931948))

also illustrating the value he represented in his immediate environment, how he influenced his parishioners in a minority setting, and pointing out what, and perhaps why, disturbed the new rulers of this region.

### Origin, studies, and the beginning of his career

Imre Narancsik was born on 25 January 1904, in Csallóközaranyos (now Zlatná na Ostrove, Nitra District, Komárno Region, Slovakia). His mother was Terézia Cseke, and his father was Imre Narancsik.<sup>315</sup> The future pastor later recalled his father as a smallholder with 20–30 cadastral acres. Imre was the firstborn child of his parents, followed by four younger brothers: Károly, who took over the family farm, Elek, who became a pastor, Péter, who worked as an officer at the Hungarian State Railways, and the youngest, Vince, about whom we only know that he graduated from the second year of the Munkács Hungarian Royal State Commercial Secondary School in 1943.<sup>316</sup> In his autobiography, Imre also mentioned that, according to family tradition, they originated from Galgóc (now Hlohovec) and originally held a noble title.<sup>317</sup>

He completed the first two grades of elementary school at the Reformed School in Csallóközaranyos, but attended the local state elementary school for grades 3–6. At the age of thirteen, in 1917, he was enrolled in the Catholic Grammar School of the Benedictine Order in Komárom,<sup>318</sup> which he graduated with distinction in 1925.<sup>319</sup> In the autumn of the same year, he became a student at the Losonc Reformed Theological Seminary,<sup>320</sup> which had just been established. He was an outstanding student throughout his time at the seminary, and he passed his basic exams with excellent results in both written and oral forms between October 4–8, 1928. His tirelessness and affinity for learning were also evident in the fact that, thanks to his knowledge of

<sup>315</sup> Narancsik Imre törzskönyvi lapja. Lelkészi törzslapok. *Tiszántúli Református Egyházkörület Levéltára* (TtREL) I.1.i.18.; See also: DUPKA György: *Kárpátaljai magyar Gulág-lexikon. Lefejezett értelmezés, 1944–1959*, Ungvár–Budapest, Intermix Kiadó, 1999, 79.

However, Dupka incorrectly stated Narancsik's year of birth in the indicated article as 1910.

<sup>316</sup> Vitéz Pelládi Sándor (ed.): *A Munkácsi M. Kir. Állami Négytanfolyamú Kereskedelmi Középiskola évkönyve az 1942/43. iskolai évről*, Munkács, 1943, 9–10.

<sup>317</sup> Narancsik Imre önéletrajza, TtREL I.8.d.23, 3.

<sup>318</sup> A Komáromi Sz. Benedekrendi Kath. Főgimnázium értesítője az 1917/1918. iskolai évről, Jókai-Könyvnyomda R.-T., Komárom, 1918. 20.

<sup>319</sup> Gidró, Bonifác (ed.): *A Komárnói Sz. Benedek-rendi Kath. Főgimnázium értesítője az 1924/25. iskolai évről*, Komárom, 1925. 3.

<sup>320</sup> Puntigán, József: *A Losonci Theológiai Szeminárium (1925–1939)*, Losonc, 2005, 302.

German, he attended Old Testament courses at the theological faculty of the University of Halle<sup>321</sup> in the 1928/29 academic year. There is a high probability that during this time he became acquainted with the theological spirit of Karl Barth's neo-Reformation. We presume that while studying in Halle, he may have visited the city of Münster, 50 kilometers away, where Barth was teaching at the university. From 1928 to 1931, he was invited to teach Ancient Greek, Hebrew, and parts of Old Testament studies at the Losonc Theological Seminary.<sup>322</sup> In 1936, the leadership of the seminary entrusted the young pastor with teaching dogmatics and its auxiliary sciences, which he taught in the Barthian spirit until 1938.<sup>323</sup> By this time, he was proficient in German and Czech, and had a moderate command of English. He passed both of his ordination exams in Losonc with distinction (the first on 29 May 1929, and the second on 30 June 1931).

In December 1929, after completing his first ordination exam, he briefly served as a chaplain in Zsigárd<sup>324</sup> (now Žihárec, Nitra District, Slovakia), while also becoming the secretary of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in Slovakia starting in January 1930. In addition to his work as synod secretary, in January 1930, he was appointed as a regular religious instructor at the State Teacher Training Institute in Bratislava. During the 1930/1931 academic year, he taught religion for 2–3 hours per week to 37 students from the Bratislava Hungarian State Realgymnasium, 5 from the German Realgymnasium, 3 from the German Civic Boys' School, and 19 students from the State Teacher Training Institute at the local Reformed Church council hall.<sup>325</sup> In the 1932/33 academic year, Narancsik taught religion for 4 hours per week at the Ursuline convent<sup>326</sup> school and 7 hours per week at the state Hungarian teacher training school, totaling 11 hours

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321 The full name of the town at that time was Halle an der Saale.

322 Kiss, József (ed.): *A Magyarországi Református Egyház egyetemes névtára az 1930–1932. évekre*. A Református Egyetemes Konvent megbízásából kiadta a Bethlen Gábor Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénnytársaság, Budapest, 1930. 185.

323 Kövy, Zsolt: A Losonci Református Teológiai Szeminárium. In: *Sárospataki Füzetek*. 2003/1, 119.

324 Változások a lelkészzi és tanítói karban. In: *A Komáromi Református Egyházmegye Révkomáromban 1933. május 4.-én tartott rendkívüli és szeptember 12.-én tartott rendes közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve*, Jókai Könyvnyomda, Komárno, 1933. 42.

325 Jelentés: a komáromi ref. e.-m. területén nem ref. jellegű, különböző fokú és nyelvű intézetekbe járó ref. tanulók rendszeres vallásoktatásáról az 1930. 31. tanévben. In *Jegyzőkönyv a Komáromi Református Egyházmegye Révkomáromban 1931. augusztus hó 25. napján tartott rendes évi közgyűléséről*, Jókai Könyvnyomda, Komárno, 1931. 103.

326 Order of Saint Ursula, also known as the Ursulines.

a week across the two institutions, with 86 students attending both.<sup>327</sup> In addition, he taught 34 boys and 38 girls in combined classes in grades I–V at the Augustinian Confession elementary school, 4 hours per week, in the same academic year.<sup>328</sup> His work as a religious educator was so well-regarded that the Komárom Diocese awarded him special diocesan recognition for his successful and excellent results in teaching religion and music.

On 12 March 1932, he moved to Bratislava to serve as secretary to Elemér Balogh, bishop of the Reformed Church District of Dunántúl. Then, starting 31 August 1935, he was assigned to the Reformed Diocese of Bars “for the so-called post of dean’s assistant pastor’s position in Garamkissalló”<sup>329</sup> After a month, he was transferred to Léva by his bishop, where he served until the end of January 1936.

### **Moving to Nagymuzsaly, founding a family**

In January 1936, “three presbyters from Muzsaly, the two János Tóths and János Sztreha, heard him preach in Léva. As soon as they came out of the church, they invited him to become their pastor. It was a miracle that this highly educated pastor, theology professor accepted the invitation from the Muzsaly congregation, which was looking for a pastor,” recalled 79-year-old Ferenc Pataky, whose father had been a presbyter in Nagymuzsaly during Narancsik’s time.<sup>330</sup> The pastor arrived at his future place of service on February 11, 1936, and was installed into his position on February 16.<sup>331</sup> He was ordained as a pastor on September 22, 1939, in Debrecen.<sup>332</sup> After changing his place of service, he married Gabriella Tusa, a state school teacher on July 2 of the same year in Visk (Ugocsa County).<sup>333</sup> In Pataky’s recollection,

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327 A Komáromi Református Egyházmegye Révkomáromban 1933. május 4.-én tartott rendkívüli és szeptember 12.-én tartott rendes közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve, Jókai Könyvnyomda, Komárno, 1933. 60.

328 Ibidem, 61.

329 Narancsik Imre önéletrajza, TtREL I.8.d.23, 4.

330 Badó, Zsolt: Narancsik Imre nagymuzsalyi lelkipásztor, in: *Kárpátalja*, 9(2009/434), 2009. május 8., 11.

331 Narancsik Imre törzskönyvi lapja, TtREL I.1.i.18, 2.

332 Szabadi, István (szerk.): *Tiszántúli református lelkész önéletrajzok 1942–1944. I. kötet*, Debrecen – Nagyvárad, 2016, 90.

333 The daughter of Menyhért Tusa, a pastor from Visk, and Julianna Biki, who graduated in 1933 from the VIII/B class of the Beregszász State Secondary School, see: Benda, István – Orosz, László (ed.): *A Beregszászi Magyar Gimnázium története 1864–1989*. Magyarság-kutatás Intézet, Budapest, 1990. 154.

he also mentioned that “my parents and my grandmother had a very close, good relationship with the Narancsik family, and from them, I learned that Imre Narancsik came to Transcarpathia because of his love. His future wife, Ella Tusa, was his student. Whenever possible, he traveled by train to Visk to be with his love, and their wedding took place here in the Muzsaly parsonage, where they also lived”.<sup>334</sup> This recollection seems to be based on facts, as Narancsik’s wife indeed completed her teacher training in Pozsony (now Bratislava).<sup>335</sup> The couple had two daughters: Gabriella, born on 16 June 1939, and Ágnes, born on 19 August 1942.

His wife, Gabriella, received her appointment as a regular teacher at the state elementary school in Nagymuzsaly from the Hungarian Royal Minister of Religion and Public Education (Bálint Hóman) in October 1939 (90.900/1939. VI. ü. o. no.).<sup>336</sup>

### **The editor, public figure, publicist, and speaker in the time of the First Czechoslovak Republic**

Imre Narancsik must have had a good sense of style, as he was already publishing articles while he was still in high school and, as a theology student in Losonc, became involved in the Reformed youth movement, the Bethlen Gábor Movement.<sup>337</sup> Along with Imre Varga, he co-edited the movement’s student newspaper, *Református Élet* (Reformed Life).

An important milestone in his life was the 1929 publication of *Baráti Szó* (Friendly Word) in Beregszász (now Berehove), which he co-edited with Imre Varga and Gyula Tárnok. This was a politically neutral ecclesiastical and social monthly journal, closely aligned with the Flegösmovement and the Sarló. In the tenth issue of *Mi Lapunk* (Our Newspaper) in 1929, a short news item about the publication of *Baráti Szó* mentioned that “the new journal has no subscription fee and is sent free of charge to anyone interested”.<sup>338</sup> The first issues were unnumbered, more like pamphlets, and only the publisher’s name (Kálmán Tóth) appeared on them. Starting from September 1929, the first official volume of the journal was published in Komárom,

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334 Badó: op.cit., 11.

335 Dr. Krüzsely, József: Narancsik Imre emlékezetére. In: *Bethlen Naptár* (Ligonier), 1964. 117.

336 S.n.: Kinevezés, in: *Hivatalos Közlöny*, 47(1939/20), 407.

337 Fodor-Fodor-Szabadi-Szabórovskyné Nagy: op.cit., 7.

338 Turczel, Lajos: Két kor mezsgyéjén (A magyar irodalom fejlődési feltételei és problémái Csehszlovákiában 1918 és 1938 között), Madách, Bratislava, 1983. 164.

with Gyula Tárnok as the responsible editor and publisher, and Imre Narancsik, later followed by Imre Varga, as the chief editor.<sup>339</sup> The journal was indeed sent free of charge to anyone, but the editorial board accepted voluntary donations and contributions. Most of the writers were pastors or seminary students; however, the journal ceased publication after the fifth issue of the second volume, released in June 1930.<sup>340</sup> In his 1932 memoir, Rezső Szalatnay wrote that “the journal, which had brought Calvinism’s activism into modern service, was banned by the church convention”.<sup>341</sup> This contemporary remark seems to have some validity, as it is known from Vilmos Galo’s research that in 1930, the Convent entrusted Imre Narancsik and Imre Varga (as assistant pastors) with the spiritual care of Reformed youth in secondary and higher education. The initial phase was quite successful, but at the 1931 countrywide conference, some left-wing youth views sparked significant debate. The conference caused a scandal, and as a result, *Baráti Szó* ceased publication, and Narancsik and Varga resigned from their positions.<sup>342</sup>

Almost simultaneously (on 15 November 1931), a manifestation meeting was held by the Hungarian university students in Bratislava at the Faculty of Law of the Comenius University. In the pamphlet they drafted, they identified specific fields – sociology, minority studies, ethnography, people’s history, minority Hungarian literary history, and Slavic-Hungarian cultural relations – where, according to them, minority Hungarian scholarship should be mobilized at the Masaryk Academy. Among the contributors to the Bratislava pamphlet were, among others, Edgár Balogh, Kálmán Berecz, Lajos Derne, Norbert Duka Zólyomi, and Imre Narancsik,<sup>343</sup> who developed the methods for sociological research.<sup>344</sup> This group collaborated with József Szent-Ivány, the leader of the Hungarian National Party, while disapproving of the left-wing radicalization of *Sarló*. According to Zoltán Fónod, alongside

339 The members of the editorial board were: Bertalan Csáji, Zoltán Csomár, Béla Sörös, Sándor Varga.

340 Fónod, Zoltán (főszerk): *A cseh/szlovákiai magyar irodalom lexikona 1918–2004*, Madách-Posonium, 2004. 37.

341 Szalatnay, Rezső: *Van menekvés. Slovenská Grafia*, Bratislava, 1932. 194.

342 Galo, Vilmos: „Jézus Krisztus együgyű szolgája”: Tóth Kálmán református lelkész élete és munkássága (1904–1956), in: Makkai, Béla (szerk.) *A Felvidék krónikása: tanulmányok a 70 éves Popély Gyula tiszteletére*. Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem – L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2015. 217.

343 Popély, Gyula: *A Csehszlovákiai Magyar Tudományos, Irodalmi és Művészeti Társaság megalakulása (folytatás)*. In: *Irodalmi Szemle*, 1970/1. 241.

344 Ibid, 74–75.

Ferdinánd Szerényi, Narancsik was also the vice president of the university youth movement that became known as the Hungarian Workers' Union.<sup>345</sup>

Narancsik was also a founding member of the executive board of the Czechoslovak Hungarian Minority Society (CzHMS), which was established on 19 January 1936, in Bratislava, alongside Norbert Duka Zólyomi, István Hornyánszky Jr., and Jenő Krammer.<sup>346</sup> Later, after moving to Transcarpathia, he took on public roles in the region: he became the vice president of the Cultural Committee of the United Hungarian Party of Upper Hungary (in Hungarian: Felvidék). In the following year, 1937, he became a member of the editorial board of the Reformed social magazine *Összefogás* (Unity).<sup>347</sup>

He took on public speaking engagements at a very young age. For example, at the age of 26, he participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Reformed Student Conference of the Slovak Reformed Church in Rožňava,<sup>348</sup> followed by numerous similar invitations and lectures in both Slovakia and Ruthenia, including Nagykálna, Kamocsa, Csap, Tornagörögő, and Debrecen. He became a regular speaker for the so-called *Széchenyi Circle*, a civil organization for university students from Prague, Brno, and Bratislava, where he gave informative lectures on various topics.

His first significant journalistic work was his contribution to the literary debate initiated by Dezső Kosztolányi in the July 1929 issue of *A Toll (The Pen)*, titled *The Betrayal of the Illiterate (A Separate Opinion on Endre Ady)*,<sup>349</sup> which is still referenced in bibliographies of works about Ady published after 2000.<sup>350</sup> From 1934, he became a regular contributor to *Magyar Írás* (Hungarian Writing),<sup>351</sup> publishing alongside notable names like Géza

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345 Fónod: op.cit., 266.

346 Ibid, 69.

347 Összefogás was a Reformed social newspaper published fortnightly from 15 May to 25 December 1937. It was published in Rimaszombat by Béla Sörös, and the editor-in-chief was Imre Varga, a Reformed pastor from Rimaszombat. The members of the editorial board were also respected personalities: Sándor Agyagássy, Pál Csáji, Imre Narancsik and Béla Szilassy. The newspaper was published by "the Reformed Összefogás as the official organ of the Universal Reformed Church". This movement was launched in 1935 by Béla Szilassy and Béla Sörös in order to increase the public profile of the Reformed Hungarians, see: Fónod: op.cit., 322.

348 S.n.: Magyar élet idegenben, *Budapesti Hírlap*, 50 (1930/134), 1930. június 15., 26.

349 Narancsik, I(mre): Az Ady-problémához. In: *Baráti Szó*, 1(1929/4). dec. 38-39.

350 Veres, András: Kosztolányi Ady-komplexuma, Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2012. 364.

351 MAGYAR ÍRÁS (HUNGARIAN WRITING) – Literature, art, criticism. (Literary, art, criticism, social magazine and observer.) Published by the Slovenszkó Kazinczy Book and Newspaper Publishing Cooperative.

Féja, Boris Palotai, Zoltán Somlyó, Mihály Tamás, Áron Tamási, and Jenő Tersánszky.<sup>352</sup> In the January 1937 issue of the aforementioned magazine, his work *Magyarság és Európa* (Hungary and Europe) was reviewed by László Németh in the *Korunk Szava* publication.<sup>353</sup> Also published in *Magyar Írás* was his article *The Third Reich and Humanism*, which, according to Tamás Gusztáv Filep's analysis, faithfully reflected a positive openness and critical stance toward events in Italy and Germany, a view which also appeared in Slovakian Hungarian public life and journalism.<sup>354</sup> Narancsik Imre's name is also found among the authors of the study collection *Magyarság Csehszlovákiában 1918–1938*<sup>355</sup> (Hungarians in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938), which includes 23 essays.<sup>356</sup>

### **Public life engagement after the return to the Kingdom of Hungary**

After the First Vienna Award in the autumn of 1938, Narancsik became a member of the Bereg and Ugocsa Counties' Legislative Authority Committee. Once all of TransCarpathia was returned to the Kingdom of Hungary, János Gömöry convened a meeting of former Slovakian and Ruthenian Hungarian writers at the Pilvax Café in Budapest on April 1–2, 1939, on behalf of the intellectuals. The participants here compiled a ten-point resolution for the program for which – in addition to Narancsik – Kálmán Berecz, Sándor Vájlok and Bolya, and Canon Miklós Pfeiffer submitted their written proposals.<sup>357</sup> According to Ildikó Bajcsi, the intellectual circle of *Slovakian writers and cultural workers* who gathered at Pilvax distanced themselves from the totalitarian direction of Imrédy's regime.<sup>358</sup> It is believed that this program had little resonance at the time, but – as Veronika Szeghy-Gayer put it –, it must be seen as a noteworthy effort of cooperation, as the intellectuals raised the issue of continuing the institu-

352 Lakatos, Éva: *Magyar irodalmi folyóiratok. Ma Este–Magyar Szemle. A Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum Bibliográfiai Füzetei*, A. sorozat 11–13. Budapest, 1978. 1062.

353 Hartyányi István, Kovács Zoltán (compiled): Németh László bibliográfia. PIM, Budapest, 1992. 19.

354 Filep, Tamás Gusztáv: *A humanista voksa. Írások a csehszlovákiai magyar kisebbség történetének köréből 1918–1945*. Kalligram Kiadó, Pozsony, 2007, 168.

355 The collection of studies was published as a special issue of *Az Ország Útja* (The Road of the Country) Book Day in June 1938, edited by István Borsody.

356 Hartyányi-Kovács: op.cit., 248.

357 Filep: op.cit., 217.

358 Bajcsi, Ildikó: *Nemzethűség és örségváltás. A komáromi és környékbeli zsidóság jogfosztása 1938–1944*. Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, Budapest, 2023. 52.

tions established during the minority period.<sup>359</sup>

Despite this – or precisely because of this – Narancsik’s name appeared among the list of members in the *cultural department* of the United Hungarian Party, which was founded on 10 June 1939, in Budapest. Other prominent names included Marcell Jankovich, Miklós Pfeiffer, János Gömöry, County Head Endre Korláth, and Menyhért Simon. In his speech, Narancsik outlined the cultural, social, and societal problems of the reannexed Upper Hungary (Felvidék), particularly TransCarpathia.<sup>360</sup> In 1940, he became a member of the Hungarian Society for Social Sciences,<sup>361</sup> and his name was included in the Book of Gold of the Martyrs and Heroes of Upper Hungary (Felvidék).<sup>362</sup>

In 1941, when the Christian Youth Association (CYA) launched the People’s College movement in TransCarpathia, Narancsik was one of the founding members of the *TransCarpathian branch* and remained an active participant. In fact, in March 1942, he was present as an examiner at the first final exams of the CYA’s People’s College in Beregszász (now Berehove), where he evaluated students’ performance in national education and health studies.<sup>363</sup> He regularly and willingly gave lectures at other People’s College events,<sup>364</sup> as well as at a lecture series organised by the Beregszász gymnasium under the title *Parents’ School*.<sup>365</sup> One of his public engagements led to the following: in 1941, he became the secretary-general of the northeastern Hungarian branch of the United Christian National League, where he presented the

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359 For more information see: Szeghy-Gayer, Veronika: *Felvidékből Szlovenszkó. Magyar értelmiségi útkeresések Eperjesen és Kassán a két világháború között*. Kalligram Kiadó, Pozsony, 2016. 222.

360 S.n.: Megalakult az Egyesült Magyar párt kultúrszakosztálya, in: *Felvidéki Magyar Hirlap*, 2(1939/131), 1939. június 11., 9.

361 S.n.: A Társulat élete, in: *Társadalomtudomány*, 21(1941/3), 367.

362 Kemény, Gábor: Északi magyar szellem, in: *Felvidéki mártírok és hősök aranykönyve. Felvidéki irodalmi emlékkönyv*. MEFHOSZ, Budapest, 1940. 399.

363 S.n.: Nagy sikerrel zárult az első beregszászi népfőiskola, in: *Kárpáti Hiradó*, 19(1942/53), 1942. március 6. 5. The members of the examination committee were also: Szabolcs Péchy Bereg County Governor, Zoltán Fekésházy sub-governor, Gyula Bary Reformed dean, count László Teleki President of the KIE Association, Kálmán Hubay The mayor of Beregszász.

364 Cs.K.: Népfőiskolái tanfolyam záróünnepélye Mosonrónafőn, in: *Dunántúli Protestáns Lap*, 55(1944/1), 1944. január 4., 4.

365 S.n.: Beregi hírek. Szülök iskolája Beregszászon, in: *Kárpáti Hiradó*, 21(1944/35), 1944. február 13., 1.

1941 Act XV from a religious and racial-biological perspective.<sup>366</sup>

In the December 1942 elections of the Bereg Diocese, Imre Narancsik, the pastor of Nagymuzsaly, was elected as the pastoral secretary.<sup>367</sup> He was also an active member of the Northeastern-Hungarian Hungarian Cultural Association, as in March 1943, when the association's headquarters was moved from Ungvár to Beregszász, he was elected to the association's central leadership during the re-election.<sup>368</sup> Meanwhile, he continued to publish in the *Protestáns Szemle* (Protestant Review), *Theológiai Szemle* (Theological Review), and the *Kárpáti Magyar Gazda* (Carpathian Hungarian Farmer) daily newspapers. In the first two, he wrote on scientific and theological topics, while in the latter, he focused on cultural and agricultural subjects.

In 1964, József Krüzsely, a Hungarian Reformed pastor from Geneva,<sup>369</sup> wrote about a conversation he had with Narancsik in a memoir. The conversation took place during the summer in Nagymuzsaly. While the exact year was not specified by the author, he mentioned that it "happened during the war" and that Narancsik was "about forty years old at the time," which suggests that the year was 1944. The memoir reads: "We walked down the long village road towards the Jewish cemetery. [...] We walked together, speaking quietly. [...] Military vehicles were heading to the front. Beyond the Carpathians, artillery fire could be heard, and the earth gave us a dull thud under our feet. Suddenly, I thought: what will happen if the Russians come to Transcarpathia? I pondered this and voiced my suspicion.

'I will stay here,' came the response of my host, in a dull tone.

'And if the Russians don't need priests?' I continued, asking the fate with blind suspicion.

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366 Porcsalmi, János: Vita a zsidó-magyar házassági tilalomról a Beregvármegyei Kaszinóban, in: *Kárpáti Híradó* 18(1941), 1941. szeptember 25., 4.; S.n.: Kialakulóban a Kereszteny nemzeti liga északkeletmagyarországi egységhoz. A beregszászi értekezlet és közgyűlés munkája, in: *Kárpáti Híradó*, 19(1942/70), 1942. március 27., 4.

367 S.n.: A beregi ref. egyházmegye. In: *Az Öslakó*, 5(1942/49), 1942. december. 13., 3.

368 S.n.: Az ÉMKE központját Ungvárról elvitték Beregszászba, in: *Kárpáti Híradó*, 20(1943/53), 1943. március 6., 2.

369 József Krüzsely was born in Visk (formerly Máramaros county, now Transcarpathia), attended law school in Prague and Budapest, and has left Hungary in 1946. He studied theology at the University of Geneva. In 1957, he became a Reformed pastor with the support of the Swiss Reformed Churches Aid Organization, and served as a Hungarian-language pastor in French Switzerland and the Canton of Bern (Geneva, Lausanne, Bern) for 30 years. See: Website of the Hungarian Protestant Church in Geneva (available at: <https://genfi-protestans.com/tortenet/>) and Nyugati Hírlevél, an independent electronic newspaper, (available at: <https://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00014/00074/>)

‘Then I will lay down my robes, but I will stay with my people,’ came the answer again”.<sup>370</sup>

## Soviet arrest and martyrdom

After the Soviet Red Army occupied TransCarpathia in October 1944, the deportation of the local Hungarian and German male population began. However, the pastors were demonstratively not taken at that time. Nevertheless, from 1946 onwards, Reformed pastors who had played an active role in the region were arrested on charges of *anti-Soviet activities*. The arrest warrant for Imre Narancsik was issued on November 21, 1946, by lieutenant Kovály.<sup>371</sup> The authorization for the arrest was signed by lieutenant-colonel Aksyenov on November 27, and he was arrested the following day, on November 28.<sup>372</sup> In a memoir, Ferenc Pataky – mentioned earlier in the study – recalled the arrest: “Once, at the end of 1946, Narancsik was travelling by cart to Vári (now Vary) with his uncle-in-law to the mill. As they were returning, they were pulled off the cart and taken to Ungvár (today Uzhhorod)”.<sup>373</sup> The Reverend was charged with *anti-Soviet activities* under Articles 54-4 and 54-10, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code of the USSR,<sup>374</sup> which he allegedly carried out between 1941 and the autumn of 1944. Despite the anachronism that the area where Narancsik lived was not under Soviet Union control during those years, this did not affect the proceedings.

The charges against him specifically included the following points:

- he was the editor of the fascist regional newspaper *Magyar Gazda*;
- during 1941 and until the arrival of Red Army units, he regularly used the newspaper for active anti-Soviet agitation;
- he was the author of many anti-Soviet articles;
- he personally called upon the Hungarian population to fight the Red Army with arms;
- he praised the political system of *fascist* Germany;

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<sup>370</sup> Dr. Krüzsely: op.cit., 117.

<sup>371</sup> Kovály was the chief operational officer of the Berehove District Office of the State Security Office.

<sup>372</sup> Aksyenov was a lieutenant colonel in the Transcarpathian Regional Department of the State Security Service.

<sup>373</sup> Badó: op.cit., 8.

<sup>374</sup> Arkhiv Upravlinnia Sluzhbi Bezpeki Ukrainskoho Zakarpats’koho oblasti, AUSBU ZO (in English: Archive of the Department of the Security Service of Ukraine in the Transcarpathian region), Fond P-2258, Op. 1, Od. zb. 3292. D. 1063.

- he informed the Hungarian authorities about individuals sympathetic to the Communist Party.<sup>375</sup>

Imre Narancsik was held in investigative detention in Uzhhorod from November 28, 1946, to February 10, 1947, in the KGB prison,<sup>376</sup> where he endured severe abuse during interrogation. This was described in a later memoir by Reverend József Zimány: “There was a very kind, half-Rusyn, half-Hungarian guard at the Uzhhorod KGB prison named Bodnár... He told me: ‘Reverend, it is good for you; you can enter this cell if they call you, you can step out, but in this cell was Narancsik Imre, the pastor from Nagymuzsaly, whose hands I had to tie behind his back, open the door, and kick him from behind so that he fell face first to the ground. He couldn’t protect himself from the fall. I had to do it because I was ordered to. It was so terrible that I had to do this’<sup>377</sup> Zimány’s memoir includes another passage about Narancsik: “This pastor himself edited a newspaper that contained political articles. He wrote things in his paper like ‘Hungarian soldiers, wade knee-deep in the blood of the Reds, stomp the atheists into the blood,’ and he signed his name. When the Russians came in, the Jehovah’s Witnesses caught him, gathered the papers and took them to the KGB. They claimed to hate political systems, but they handed people over to it. They brought Narancsik in for questioning, but at first, he could defend himself by proving he was on vacation when the newspaper was published, and he had only signed his name. Later, however, newspaper articles surfaced from times when he was no longer on vacation, and he could not defend himself with that argument. These were articles written with hatred against communism”.<sup>378</sup> This text repeats the same fact as stated in the appeal submitted by Narancsik, namely that it was the Jehovah’s Witnesses who may have been his accusers. An interesting coincidence is that these informers (who were referred to as communists in the court documents) had already been interrogated in December 1945 by the Beregszász (now Berehove) district office of the State Security Bureau. These interrogation records were later used in the 1947 trial against Narancsik, as they were attached to the court files.<sup>379</sup>

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375 Ibidem.

376 The full English name: *Committee for State Security* (espionage: KGB), foreign intelligence and domestic security agency of the Soviet Union.

377 Zimányi, József: Tűzoszlópoddal jéghegyek között. Zimányi József életútja. Kiadja: Zimányiné Piros Erzsébet, 2023. 72. Available at: <https://www.zimanyi.hu/download/TuzoszloddalJeghegyekKozott-ZimanyiJozsef.pdf>

378 Ibidem.

379 AUSBU ZO, Fond P-2258, op. 1, od. zb. 3292. d. 1063. ark. 35-40.

## The Verdict and Appeal

On 27 February 1947, the verdict was pronounced against Imre Narancsik: under the provisions of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's Criminal Code (Article 54-4), he was sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment in a forced labor camp. In addition, based on Articles 29a, b, and c of the Criminal Code, he was sentenced to 5 years' legal deprivation and the confiscation of his personal property as a cumulative punishment. There is a recollection of this trial in an interview with Ferenc Pataky: "When he was sentenced, several members of the church board went to Ungvár (today Uzhhorod) to prove his innocence, including my father, János Szatmári, János Beregszászi, and Mihály Sztreha. They strongly defended him, but despite this, they convicted him based on the newspaper articles he had written".<sup>380</sup> The people mentioned by the memoirist as witnesses in favour of the pastor – Gizella Elek, Ferenc Pataki, János Lengyel, and Mihály Sztreha – are listed in the court records.<sup>381</sup> His sentence was due to start on 28 November, 1946, and the judgment could be appealed to the Supreme Court of the USSR within five days. Among the court documents is an appeal dated 3 March 1947 bearing the signature of an attorney named Boreckiy, but the style of the text closely resembles Narancsik's own language. In his appeal, he specifically refuted the accusations against him:

- the newspaper mentioned in the case was a small, local publication focused on agriculture, not politics;
- he was not the editor of the newspaper, only an assistant for three months, and he was not a permanent member of the editorial staff;
- during the trial, only one article with his name as the author was presented, an MTI<sup>382</sup> news piece about Horthy's birthday;
- the people named in the case – G. Varga, G. Kovács, and Zs. Tar – were not communists but Jehovah's Witnesses at the time;
- he did not engage in anti-Soviet activities; on the contrary, he persuaded the people of the village not to flee from the Red Army;
- he did not have any literature that could be classified as anti-Soviet, unless Mussolini's *Conversations with My Son Bruno* is considered as such, although Lenin's works were also in his library, this was not mentioned during the trial.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Badó: op.cit., 8.

<sup>381</sup> AUSBU ZO, Fond P-2258, op. 1, od. zb. 3292. d. 1063.

<sup>382</sup> The full English name: *Hungarian Telegraph Office*, espionage: MTI

<sup>383</sup> Fellebbezési kérelem, Ibidem.

## The rejection of the appeal and Imre Narancsik's fate

On 21 March 1947, the Supreme Court of the USSR rejected Narancsik's appeal. After this, in late March 1947, he was sent to the Tayset No. 7 labour camp in the Irkutsk Oblast in a poor state of health, and from there, he was sent to Irkutsk. Gusztáv Menczer, a third-year medical student from Budapest, was also taken into Soviet captivity and sent to the same Tajset No. 7 camp. Once it became known that Menczer was a doctor (under Soviet conditions, having completed 2.5 years of medical studies qualified him as such), he was assigned to the camp's hospital. Eventually, both Menczer and Narancsik, along with a group of prisoners, were transferred to Irkutsk to work on the construction of the Baikal-Amur railway. In his book *The Gulag's Prison Camps*, Menczer describes the conditions as follows: "When we arrived at the designated prison camp, and the prisoners were handed over, the commander of the transport group told me to stay there overnight, as they would come for me the next day. [...] They then took me to an area called a hospital, which consisted of a three-room barrack for patients, a kitchen, and a small isolated house. [...] The area we were assigned to for supplies could have been as large as France. The mosquitoes were as numerous as the sea. In one of the new houses, the staff lived. The doctors and two orderlies had separate rooms, and each had a cot. For the miscellaneous tasks – at my suggestion – we took Narancsik Imre, the Reformed pastor from Muzsaly in Transcarpathia. This is how I began to help the fellow prisoners. Since everyone else was working during 'working hours' or on duty, it was Imre brother who brought the food to each of us from the kitchen. He collected about 15 kilograms of leftovers".<sup>384</sup>

Imre Narancsik was taken by his Creator in April 1948, in Siberian Irkutsk, far from his homeland. His death was not caused by the abuse he suffered in prison or the strenuous labour, but by dystrophy (a nutritional disorder), as determined by Menczer.

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384 Menczer Gusztáv: *A Gulág rabtelepei. A bolsevizmus népirtásának színtere*. Századvég Kiadó, Budapest, 2016. 31.

## **The fate of Narancsik's family left behind in Nagymuzsaly**

Regarding Narancsik's family, who remained in Nagymuzsaly (now Mužhiyeve), Ferenc Pataky recalled: "The pastor's wife, along with their two daughters, was expelled from the parsonage, and in their place, a Russian officer moved in with his wife and son. My father brought back a cartload of books from there. Later, pastors and doctors sorted through them in the back room of our house. There were many medical books among them; the little they gave in exchange for the valuable books was important to them (Narancsik's family – ISZN), as they had to live off something. The pastor's wife was initially given a one-room house by the school director, as she continued to teach at the school for a time. After a while, they had to move out from there as well, and a family took them in here on the main street. Later, they moved to Nagyszőlős, and eventually, with the help of a relative pastor's family, they managed to emigrate to Hungary".<sup>385</sup>

### **Memory and Remembrance**

Although Imre Narancsik was not born in Transcarpathia, his memory lives on in Nagymuzsaly (now Mužhiyeve) to this day. In the account by Ferenc Pataky, which has been mentioned multiple times, many details have been found that are confirmed by other sources as well. Zoltán Bereczky, also a resident of Nagymuzsaly, was ten years old in 1944 and in 2009 he recalled the pastor's deportation: "On 24 October 1944, the Russian soldiers entered Muzsaly without resistance. Imre Narancsik and my father, György Bereczky, welcomed them. They occupied the village without firing a shot. 'Well, we got through the war,' they said, but they were wrong. Not long after, the Hungarian men from Nagymuzsaly, including my father and his brother, Dr Gusztáv Bereczky, a lawyer, were taken for a three-day work assignment. A total of 132 Hungarian men from Muzsaly died in the Borissov camp in Belarus. Imre Narancsik stayed a while longer, but eventually, he too was taken away. His family was expelled from the parsonage, and a border guard lieutenant colonel named Popov moved in. The pastor regularly travelled to examine students at the seminary, corresponded in several languages, edited a newspaper, and had excellent connections. But if needed, he would take the sprayer, walk to Várná Hill, and personally spray the church's vineyard, weed the garden, and he had two cows and Angora rab-

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385 Badó: op.cit., 8.

bits. I can hardly imagine that nowadays with a Reformed pastor. Everyone looked up to him; he had respect".<sup>386</sup>

Perhaps the most human portrayal of his character comes from Elemér Ortutay, a Greek Catholic priest and theology teacher, who summarised his personality in one of his memoirs: "His iron logic, persuasive eloquence, burning and pure Hungarian consciousness, and the priestly sense of vocation that radiated from his essence had a great impact on me. I can say without exaggeration that I owe much of my self-conscious Hungarian identity and my human and priestly sense of calling to Imre Narancsik. It may seem strange to many that the words and life of a Reformed pastor had such a decisive influence on the life of a Greek Catholic theologian, but that is the fact. I hold Narancsik Imre in great respect and gratitude".<sup>387</sup>

The frequently cited Ferenc Pataky also shared true facts regarding the rehabilitation of the pastor: "In the early 1990s, we received a letter in Russian, informing us that the authorities had rehabilitated the pastor. We translated it together and informed the congregation, and then we unveiled a marble plaque in honour of our martyr pastor, Imre Narancsik, on the church wall. The two daughters and the widow were present at the unveiling ceremony. The pastor's wife requested that if we got the Reformed parsonage back, we must invite them to Muzsaly. Unfortunately, she had passed away by that time".<sup>388</sup>

The reference to the *early 1990s* in the above memoir refers to spring of 1991, as the resolution regarding the pastor's rehabilitation was passed on 28 February 1991. The question of why the notification about the rehabilitation was sent to the pastor of Muzsaly at the time is answered in the last paragraph of the resolution: "There is no information in the case file about the residence of Narancsik and his relatives. The results of the investigation should be communicated to the pastor of Muzhiyeve, Mihály Sztreha, in the Beregszász district".<sup>389</sup> The memorial plaque was placed on the wall of the Reformed Church vestibule in 1993, and on 4 December 2009, a library named after him was inaugurated in the community house.<sup>390</sup> On 27 No-

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386 Ibid.

387 ORTUTAY Elemér: "...holnap is felkel a nap". *Emékeim*, Ungvár–Budapest, Intermix Kiadó, 1993, 51–52.

388 Badó: op.cit., 8.

389 Határozat Narancsik Imre rehabilitációjáról, idézi: Fodor: op.cit., 117.

390 FISCHER Zsolt: Könyvtáratás Nagymuzsalyban, *Kárpátalja*, 9 (2009/465), 2009. december 11. Available at: <https://karpataljalap.net/2009/12/11/konyvtaravatas-nagy-muzsalyban>

vember 2015, the Narancsik Imre Research Workshop was established in the Narancsik Imre Library in Nagymuzsaly with 11 members. The workshop, guided by the spirit of the scholarly pastor, set out to uncover the history of the Transcarpathian reformed people using authentic sources.<sup>391</sup> The author of these lines is also a member of this workshop. Soli Deo Gloria.

**In conclusion**, it can be stated that Imre Narancsik was a person endowed with exceptional talents, whose intellectual abilities were recognised by his professors and church leaders during his university years. After finishing his theological studies, he primarily taught religious education in Bratislava and the surrounding areas, a job that was not typically the primary desire of graduated theologians (even if they were in an assistant pastor position). Nevertheless, Narancsik performed his duties with full dedication and conscientiousness in this position, utilizing his unique erudition. Perhaps this was also essential for him to be appointed as the bishop's secretary in Levoča, where the elders from Nagymuzsaly found him and invited him to become the pastor of their village after his sermon. Of course, the people from Nagymuzsaly who visited Levoča did not know at the time that Narancsik was in love with a woman from Transcarpathia. With this knowledge, it is not so surprising that he accepted the invitation from the Transcarpathian faithful, as it brought him into a full pastoral role and brought him closer to his future wife, Gabriella Tusa. However, his relocation had little impact on his previous activities: he continued to perform his pastoral duties in Nagymuzsaly with great enthusiasm and vigour, visiting the seminary to teach until 1938 and continuing his work as a public writer. He also continued his sociological and history-of-science work.

Imre Narancsik did not flee before the Soviet troops entered, nor did he leave his parishioners, continuing his pastoral duties. He did not commit any offence against the new rulers of the region after 1944; he did not renounce his faith, ideas, or actions. His consistent life philosophy also played a role in his persecution and ultimately led to his martyrdom. However, his figure and activities became engraved in the memory of the local people.

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<sup>391</sup>BÁDÓ Zsolt: Megalakult a Narancsik Imre Kutatói Műhely. A Kárpátaljai Református Egyház történetének szakszerű kutatásáért, Kárpátalja, 15 (2015/777), 2015. december 2. Available at: <https://karpatjalap.net/2015/12/02/megalakult-narancsik-imre-kutatoi-muhely>

J. Selye University Faculty of Reformed Theology  
Univerzita J. Selyeho Reformovaná Teologická Fakulta  
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**Editors/ Redaktori:**

PaedDr. Attila Petheő, PhD., *Univerzity of Szeged Juhász Gyula Faculty of Education, Institute of Vocational Training, Adult Education and Knowledge Management, Associate Professor. Szegedi Tudmányegyetem Szakképzési, Felnőttképzési és Tudásmenedzsment Intézet, docent;*

Mgr. Ferenc Tömösközi, PhD., *Selye János University Reformed Faculty of Theology of the Department of Historical Sciences, researcher. Odborný pracovník na Katedre historických vied Reformovanej teologickej fakulty Univerzity J. Selyeho.*

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Dr. Bálint Pető, *University of Szeged, Juhász Gyula Faculty of Education*

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