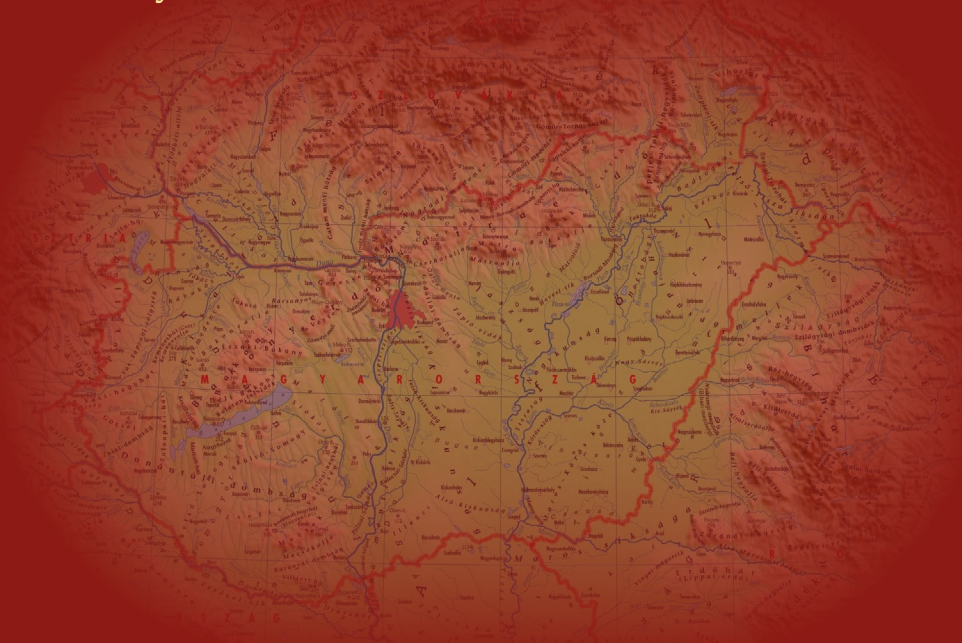


Hungarian martyrs of the Church of the Faith III.

Edited by:

Cyntia Kálmán – Attila Petheő – Ferenc Tömösközi



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Hungarian martyrs of the Church of the Faith III.



Komárno, 2025

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Realizované s finančnou podporou Fondu na podporu kultúry
národnostných menšín. The publication was supported by the Minority
Cultural Fund.

Komárno, 2025

Online ISBN: 978 - 80 - 8122 - 528 - 4

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“HIM BEING CAST INTO FIRE NOT TO BE VAIN” – THE TRIALS OF PASTOR BARNÁ HORKAY DURING THE SOVIET ERA

His studies

Barná József Horkay was born in 1908 in Kistárkány²³⁷, the third child of Barná Horkay and Anna Sasi Szabó, raised in a Reformed pastor's family of ten children. After completing his elementary education, he commenced his high school studies at the Reformed High School in Sárospatak in 1919, following in the footsteps of his brother László. During his eight years at the institution, he distinguished himself through his diligence and talent, which became increasingly evident among his peers. In addition to his academic pursuits, he played an active role in various aspects of school life. He was a regular poet at ceremonies and, as a senior student he was elected youth president of the I. György Rákóczi Association.²³⁸ In the 1926–27 academic year, he was one of six students to pass their school-leaving exams with distinction.²³⁹ Evidence suggests that members of his family have been pastors since 1720, and he displayed a precocious interest in religion. At the age of eight, he fashioned a “pulpit” from a bale of hay in the barn and delivered a sermon from it. However, his career trajectory did not align with the priesthood, as his paternal uncle, who also served as his godfather, aspired for him to pursue a military career, preferring to enrol Barná in the armed forces. This decision was met with reluctance from the young man, who instead harboured a strong desire to emulate the professional paths of his father and brother, the latter of whom was then enrolled in the fourth year of his theological studies in Sárospatak. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, he was unable to attend the officer training school the following summer, a development that, according to his own account, he welcomed, as it

²³⁶ Marianna Székely, Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College, Berehovo, Ukraine, szekely.marianna@kmf.org.ua

²³⁷ ДА30 – Державний Архів Закарпатської області, ф. Р-1420, оп. 1,

²³⁸ *A Sárospataki Református Főiskola értesítője az 1926–27-ik iskolai évről.* 1927. 58–73.

²³⁹ As posited by Anna Horkay, the direct lineage of the pastoral profession within their family can be traced back to 1708.

enabled him to enrol at the Theological Academy in Sárospatak.²⁴⁰ During his four years at the academy, he participated in social activities to the same extent as during his high school years. In his first year, he was a committee member of the College Youth Association, the Religious Students' Association and the Sárospatak Academic Athletic Club,²⁴¹ and later he also led the college choir.²⁴²

His years as a young pastor

Barna Horkay's transition into the role of pastor occurred in 1931, a moment he recollects with the following words: "*On the afternoon of that day, I was formally inducted as a Hungarian pastor*".²⁴³ For a period of two years thereafter, he continued to serve in Sárospatak, assuming the role of deputy assistant teacher at the Teachers' College. In this capacity, he fulfilled the responsibilities of institutional pastor, overseeing the Sunday school and Bible study groups, and serving as teacher-president of the John Calvin Society in collaboration with Dr Béla Vasady, the director of the theology department. This society²⁴⁴ comprised a group of theologians and students from the Teachers' College. In 1933, he was transferred to Mukačevo / Мукачево/ (Munkács), where he served as assistant pastor alongside Bishop Béla Bertók. Following the retirement of Ferenc Biky in October 1934, the pastoral post in Виноградів /Vinohradyiv/ (Vinohradyiv) became vacant. The congregation sought to fill the position by invitation; however, due to the presence of two candidates, they were unable to reach a decision. Consequently, Imre Isaák, dean of Diocese of Máramaros-Ugocsa, called for the election of a pastor. Although as many as five pastors had applied for the post, at the pastors' election meeting held in February 1935, Barna Horkay received the most votes, a fact which was reported in the Prágai Magyar Hírlap, '*with the electorate noting the result with relief and cheers*'.²⁴⁵ At the age of twenty-six, Horkay took over the leadership of a congregation of a church county, and which had previously been the ministry of mostly older pastors.

240 Barna Horkay: *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998. 19.

241 *A Sárospataki Református Főiskola értesítője az 1929–30-ik iskolai évről*. 1930. 23.

242 *A Sárospataki Református Főiskola értesítője az 1927–28-ik iskolai évről*. 1928. 88.

243 Barna Horkay: *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998. 21.

244 *A Sárospataki Református Főiskola értesítője az 1931–32-ik iskolai évről*. 1932. 138.

245 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*. 22 February 1935. 14. vol. No. 45.

In the initial year of Barna Horkay's endeavours in Vinohragyiv, in July 1935, Widow Lászlóné Atzél (née Lujza Perényi), a direct descendant of the ancient Perényi family, donated two farmhouses with 30 acres of land near Vinohragyiv to the Reformed Church for the purpose of establishing an orphanage for Hungarian children, regardless of denomination. Perényi requested that the institution should be called the Atzél-Perényi Szeretet Árvaház.²⁴⁶ The motivation behind this act of benevolence on the part of Lujza Perényi, a practising Catholic, was to honour the memory of her deceased husband, László Atzél, who had been a Reformed school inspector in Ugocsa County. The institution is set to commence its operations with a population of eight orphans, under the guidance of the widowed Jánosné Kovács, a teacher hailing from Vinohragyiv, and is scheduled to be formally inaugurated on 6 October.²⁴⁷

Therefore, the young pastor was assigned with expanded responsibilities, which will include the management of the orphanage budget²⁴⁸, maintained by voluntary contributions from the congregations of Diocese of Máramaros-Ugocsa. He will also be responsible for the expansion of the institution as the number of children increases.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, he is regularly invited to various service occasions, for example, in November 1935 he will be delivering a lecture alongside missionary Mária Molnár in Вишково /Viskovo/ (Visk)²⁵⁰, who will visit several settlements, including Vinohragyiv, during her tour of Subcarpathian testimonies.²⁵¹

On 15–16 August 1936, the congregation of Barna Horkay will play host to the annual national conference²⁵² of the Sub-Carpathian Reformed Church District for the second time, marking the ninth iteration of the event. The event will be attended by representatives of almost all the congregations of Subcarpathia, and will be held in two venues: the Reformed Church and the

246 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*, 1935. augusztus 1. 14. évf. szám, Marianna Székely: A nagyszülői Atzél-Perényi Szeretet Árvaház. In: *Küldetés. A Kárpátaljai Református Egyház Lapja*. XX-VII. évf. 2. szám, 2019. február

247 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*, 1 August 1935. 14. vol.

248 Gyula Kiss (ed.): *A Magyarországi Református Egyház egyetemes névtára 1941*. Budapest, 1941. 223.

249 Barna Horkay. *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998. 13.

250 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*. 15 November 1935. 14. vol., No. 261.

251 Barna Horkay. *Pictures from the Transcarpathian Awakening*. Kom Over En Help Foundation, 1998. 12.

252 The first conference was organised in 1927, following a decision of the Sub-Carpathian Reformed Church District, and its venue was Vinohragyiv.

Atzél-Perényi Orphanage. The event will feature a keynote address by Bishop Béla Bertók, along with contributions from Imre Isaák, dean of the Máramaros-Ugocsa Diocese, Géza Papp of Ungtarnóc /Тарнівці/, and Zsigmond Simon from Астреї /Asztej/ (Ásztély), Zoltán Király of Чоп /Csop/ (Csap), István Kiss of Вилок /Vilok/ (Tiszaújlak), Imre Narancsik of Мужієве /Muzsijeve/ (Nagymuzsaly), János Tornay of Tekove /Теково/ (Tekeháza) and Béla Szabó missionary pastor of district. Barna Horkay, the host pastor, will present the history of the Vinohragyiv congregation. “The Reformed Parish of Vinohragyiv volunteered to organise the conference and to take on the obligations that came with it, but they were not ashamed either, because the conference was a great success in every respect and the guests were delighted with the Hungarian hospitality of the people of Vinohragyiv” – as reported in the press at the time. Thus, the congregation and its leadership successfully welcomed and hosted thousands of people.²⁵³

In the autumn of the same year, a group of pastors in Хуст /Huszt/ (Huszt) founded the Circle of Friends/Eastern Circle of Friends²⁵⁴, which Barna Horkay also attended. It was during one of these meetings, according to his recollections, that he came to a living faith.²⁵⁵ From then on, he became an active member of the organisation, organising quiet days, evangelistic weeks, girls’ conferences, Bible study groups and also increasing the spiritual work among the youth.²⁵⁶ Benő Békefi, a renowned evangelizer of the era, documented this development in one of his writings.

In November 1938, Barna Horkay was compelled to relinquish his posi-

253 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*. 15 November 1935. Vol. 15, No. 188.

254 The establishment of this community was primarily associated with the inception of the inner mission, a movement spearheaded by Béla Szabó, the pastor of Huszt. In the autumn of 1936, Szabó, along with Kálmán Tóth, pastor of Чорнотисів /Csornotisiv/ (Feketeadó), and Zsigmond Simon, pastor of Ásztély, founded a community of friends in Huszt, uniting all individuals involved in the inner mission. This community comprised pastors, teachers, teachers’ assistants, and ordinary members of the congregation. Subsequently, the community became known as the Sun-Eastern or Eastern Circle of Friends, and its primary objective was to promote Reformed education. Its activities aligned with its founding purpose: to undertake missionary work within the framework of the official church, i.e. to organise women’s and girls’ circles, youth associations, visiting the sick, and giving tithes to support the poor, sick and needy, and later to support the missionary work. Orbán Marianna: *Ébredési mozgalom a Kárpátaljai Református Egyházban*. In: *Acta Beregsasiensis*, 2009. No. 2. 239–244.

255 Barna Horkay. *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998, 15.

256 *Nyírségi Virrasztó*. 15 March 1940. No. 1.

tion of service. Subsequent to the First Vienna Award, Vinohragyiv did not come under Hungarian jurisdiction; however, due to the fact that his place of residence was situated within liberated territory, the local authorities expelled him from the country.²⁵⁷ He subsequently served in Tarpa for a period of two and a half months, after which he was granted the opportunity to return to his own congregation and continue the work he had previously initiated. He participated actively in the Circle of Friends held on the first Wednesday of each month, always in a different location, for the purpose of studying the Word of God. He is a regular minister at these meetings, and from 1941 onwards, when circulars were also sent out on the proceedings of the meetings to members who were absent for some reason, his name is often found among the authors.²⁵⁸ He serves at youth conferences and evangelisation events organised by the Circle of Friends, but he is also in touch with evangelical movements in Hungary.²⁵⁹ Consequently, he is invited to serve in numerous locations. For instance, he delivered a speech at the 3rd National Reformed Conference in Nyíregyháza in March 1942, and he was one of the ministers at the evangelisation week organised in July of the same year in the House of Reconciliation in Sződliget, alongside László Bakó and Benő Békefi. The latter, whom he had encountered in 1939 at a meeting of the Circle of Friends in Батъово /Batyovo/ (Bátyu), was invited on several occasions to serve in Vinohragyiv: in March 1940 and April 1942 he held an evangelistic week in the congregation.²⁶⁰ The second occasion was overshadowed by the tragic event of two deaths in Barna Horkay's family the previous week: he lost his mother and his sister Judit, both of whom were seriously ill, within hours of each other.

Another significant event in the pastor's life in 1942 was his marriage. Two years earlier, when he was in Sződliget, as previously referenced, as a speaker at a summer silent day for women church workers, he encountered Dolorosa Törzsök, who was the leader of the Battonya Girls' Circle and Sunday school. They conversed infrequently, but nevertheless developed a mutual attraction. Their engagement was formalised on 26 July 1942, and the

257 Barna Horkay. *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998. 29–31.

258 Barna Horkay published fifteen such circular letters from the period 1941–1944 in his memoirs. See Barna Horkay. *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998. 48–94.

259 Nyírségi Virrasztó. 15 March 1942 Vol. 7 No. 6 and 1 August 1942 Vol. 7 No. 15.

260 Nyírségi Virrasztó. 1 May 1942, Vol. 7 No. 9, and Barna Horkay. *A Keleti Baráti Kör. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből*. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány, 1998. 48–94.

couple were married on 27 October of the same year. In his wife, he found a devoted and supportive partner.²⁶¹ Together, they engaged in various charitable activities, including girls' and women's meetings, providing assistance to the poor, undertaking gypsy missionary work, and participating in documentary missions. With the onset of the Second World War, they also began visiting wounded soldiers. During this period, Barna Horkay carried out numerous activities in Vinohragyiv with the assistance of his wife.

The events of 1944–1947

During the Second World War, as the Soviet troops advanced, the populace experienced a profound sense of trepidation and apprehension at the prospect of the atrocities and anti-religious sentiment of the Soviets, a sentiment that would ultimately be substantiated. A month after the Soviet troops invaded Subcarpathia in October 1944, men between the ages of 18 and 50 were compelled to work for three days in Hungarian settlements, a “Malenyky robot”, which subsequently evolved into a forced labour camp, which lasted for several years. Although this call did not apply to clergymen, the situation remained precarious.²⁶² During the autumn of 1944, several pastors and assistant pastors fled their posts, and of the three deacons, only the head of the diocese of Bereg, Gyula Bary, remained in his position.²⁶³ The remaining two deaneries were placed under the oversight of the deputies, Béla Gencsy in Ung and Sándor Lajos in Máramaros-Ugocsa, as authorised by Imre Révész, Bishop of the Reformed Church District of Tiszántúl, in a circular letter dated 18 January 1945. The bishop stated that “in the part of the diocese not accessible to the deacon, which is presumably the part in

261 Ibid. B. Horkay, 1998, 51.

262 Marianna Orbán. A Kárpátaljai Református Egyház története 1944–1949 között. In: *Történeti Tanulmányok XVI. A Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézetének kiadványa*. Debrecen, 2008. 303–317.

263 Ibolya Nagy Szamborovszkyné: Idegen világban: Bary Gyula beregi esperes lelkesítő tevékenysége a szovjetizálás időszakában. In: Réka Kiss – Gábor Lányi (eds.): *Hagyomány Identitás Történelem 2024/1*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Hittudományi Kar Egyháztörténeti Kutatóintézet, 2024. I.évf. 1. sz. 121.; Gusztáv Fodor: A református egyház első évtizede Kárpátalja szovjetizálásának idején (1944–1954), in: Molnár D Erzsébet – Molnár D István (szerk.): *Hadifogság, málenkij robot, gulág. Kárpát-medencei magyarok és németek elhurcolása a Szovjetunió hadifogoly- és kényszermunkatáborai (1944–1953)*, Beregszász–Ungvár, „Rik-U” Kiadó, 2017, 99.

Ugocsa, the legal deputy of the dean should take over the administration”.²⁶⁴ Of these three, Gyula Bary was the most senior, and was therefore the most likely to be seen by the authorities as a potential negotiating partner.²⁶⁵

Notwithstanding the challenging circumstances, the Eastern Circle of Friends persisted in their missionary endeavours within the ecclesiastical milieu, encompassing initiatives such as girls’ circles, youth Bible study, confirmation classes, and home services. However, the Soviet authorities had already prohibited their engagement with school-age children by 1945.²⁶⁶ The monthly meetings of the Circle of Friends persisted, though the participation rate exhibited a notable increase. For instance, the average attendance during the 1942–1943 period ranged from 20 to 40 individuals, whereas from the autumn of 1944 onward, the attendance figure varied between 120 and 1,300 participants. The prevailing burdens, uncertainties and fears of everyday life were increasingly drawing people towards spirituality and the Church, thereby fostering an intensification of spiritual awakening in Subcarpathia. This phenomenon naturally attracted the attention of the contemporary, historically atheistic state authorities, though no overt measures have been taken thus far. However, it is noteworthy to mention an incident that transpired with four pastors from a social circle, including Barna Horkay, while they were visiting a fellow pastor in a village in Ужгород / Uzshorod/ (Ungvár). They were travelling in a carriage when an unmarked lorry collided with them intentionally. They pulled over, but the rear axle of the wagon became stuck in the car’s wheels, causing the wagon to roll over. The vehicle continued forward. No one sustained injuries. The identity of the perpetrator of this incident remains unknown.²⁶⁷ Could it be merely a curious coincidence that Greek Catholic Bishop Tódor Romzsa was killed in a similar accident!?²⁶⁸

264 KRELM – Kárpátaljai Református Egyház Levéltára és Múzeuma, Bulcsú, I. 10.c., *A tiszántúli református egyházkerület püspökétől. 7/1945. szám alatt. Körlevél a máramaros-ugocsai egyházmegye lelkipásztoraihoz.* Debrecen, 1945. január 18.

265 Marianna Székely: Szikszai Aladár a Keleti Baráti Körről. In: Szamborovszkyné Nagy Ibolya (szerk.): *Magyar öntudat és krisztusi, keresztyén elvek.* Narancsik Imre Kutatói Műhely, Beregszász, 2019. 139–140. , Ibid. Horkay: A Keleti, 100.

266 Ibolya Nagy Szamborovszkyné: Idegen világban: Bary Gyula beregi esperes lelkész tevékenysége a szovjetesítés időszakában. In: Réka Kiss – Gábor Lányi (szerk.): *Hagyomány Identitás Történelem 2024/1*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Hittudományi Kar Egyháztörténeti Kutatóintézet, 2024. I. évf. 1. sz. 121–122.

267 Horkay: A Keleti, ibid. 108–110

268 Marianna Orbán: Ébredési mozgalom a Kárpátaljai Református Egyházban. In: *Acta Beregsasiensis*,. 2009. 2. No. 239–244.

By 1945, the membership of the Eastern Circle of Friends had grown to a sufficient size to allow a select group of six pastors to form a narrow inner core: Barna Horkay of Vinohragyiv, József Pázsit of Тисобикень /Tiszobikeny/ (Tiszabökény), István Asszonyi of Форголань (Forgolány), Zsigmond Simon of Астреї /Asztej/ (Asztély), Zoltán Kovács of Вилок /Vilok/ (Tiszaújlak) and József Zimányi of Gecse.²⁶⁹ The members of the “Six” met on a weekly and, occasionally, monthly basis to discuss the programme of the conferences, the affairs and tasks of the individual communities. Consequently, the “Six” can be regarded as the steering committee of the Eastern Circle of Friends. In 1946, on the initiative of József Zimányi, a one-month Bible school was organised in Gecse, attended by approximately 20 young people, with the objective of training church workers. This event served to further raise the profile of the Friendship Circle pastors within their respective communities.²⁷⁰

In 1947, the intensity and pace of the events escalated significantly. The state security services initiated an attempt to recruit Barna Horkay as an informant in the early months of the year. He was subjected to interrogation on several occasions over a period of two months. However, due to his apparent lack of cooperation, he was no longer called in for further questioning.²⁷¹ At that time, the relationship between the church and the state had not yet been formally established, and the churches had not yet been officially registered. The Circle of Friends expressed concerns that this could result in the state imposing a suspension on the official operations of the church. They were unaware of any ongoing negotiations with any of the deacons on behalf of the state and urged the church leadership to take the necessary steps as soon as possible.²⁷² Consequently, the three deacons instigated the election of the leader of the Sub-Carpathian Reformed Church (CRECh) in January 1947, proposing István Györke²⁷³, who, as the results of the 12 February ballot demonstrate, was unanimously elected by the congregations. However, as questions arose about the powers of the office (in

269 Of its former founders, Kálmán Tóth left the territory of Transcarpathia in 1936, and Béla Szabó in 1939, to serve elsewhere.

270 Marianna Székely: Aladár a Keleti Baráti Körről. In: Szamborovszkyné Nagy Ibolya (szerk): *Magyar öntudat és krisztusi, keresztyén elvek*. Narancsik Imre Kutatói Műhely, Beregszász, 2019. 141.

271 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 116.

272 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 117–118.

273 KRELM, I. 10.c. A *Tivadarfalvai Református Egyházközség presbiteri jegyzőkönyve*, 25 January 1947.

particular, whether it should be a regional delegate, who is the liaison between the church and the state, or a bishop at the head of the CRECh?)²⁷⁴, István Györke withdrew, and after negotiations with Lyamin-Agafonov, the regional delegate of the Council for Religious Affairs, Gyula Bary became the star, or senior regional delegate, from May 1947.²⁷⁵

In March 1947, the “Six” met in Gecse, where the idea was proposed that they should also testify their faith in God to the state. They agreed and entrusted József Zimányi and Barna Horkay with the task of taking further steps. The next day the two pastors went to Berehovo to the local authorities, where the major who received them had them write down what they had to say. Barna Horkay remembers the transcript thus: “*You took the glory of the victory for yourself. You put yourself in the place of God in everything. Next to huge fields of wheat, large billboards proclaimed the boast: without God and without prayer, but with fertilizer and a tractor! For this the Lord will humble you like Nebuchadnezzar. Your own sons will despise you. - While you still have time, go within yourself, give glory to the majestic God! It will benefit your people. The arrogant Belshazzar and his empire were lost in one night. - József Zimányi, Barna Horkay*”.²⁷⁶ This surviving version of the document was published by Gusztáv Fodor in his work “*Those who came out of the great tribulation...*”, from 2017. It is dated Ungvár, the text is longer and among the signatories we find Zsigmond Simon.²⁷⁷ The difference between the two versions can be explained as follows: the major from Berehovo, after receiving the document, simply says that they should go to Uzhhorod the next day and repeat this to the regional religious representative. The next day, Simon Zsigmond, the leader of the Circle of Friends, joins Horkay and Zimányi when they also make a profession of faith before Agafonov’s regional religious representative. This event is followed by the

274 Ibolya Nagy Szamborovszkyé: Idegen világban: Bary Gyula beregi esperes lelkész tevékenysége a szovjetesítés időszakában. In: Kiss Réka – Lányi Gábor (ed.): *Hagyomány Identitás Történelem 2024/1*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Hittudományi Kar Egyháztörténeti Kutatóintézet, 2024. I. Issue. 1. No. 125.

275 Ibolya Nagy Szamborovszkyné: Gencsy Béla egyházvezetői tevékenységének főbb irányvonalai az államszocializmus idején. In: Kiss Réka – Lányi Gábor (szerk.): *Hagyomány Identitás Történelem 2022*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Hittudományi Kar Egyháztörténeti Kutatóintézet, Budapest, 2023. 272.

276 i.m. Horkay: A Keleti, 116–117.

277 Gusztáv Fodor: *Akik a nagy nyomorúságból jöttek... A sztálini diktatúra koncepciók pereit kárpátaljai református lelkészek ellen a KGB ungvári levéltárának dokumentumai alapján. Peranyagok, életrajzi adatok, fényképek*. Kárpátaljai Református Egyház – Református Közéleti és Kulturális Központ Alapítvány, Debrecen, 2017. 178–179.

state authorities banning the Eastern Circle of Friends, which is was notified to Simon Zsigmond on 11 June.²⁷⁸

The reaction of the official church leadership has already materialised months earlier with deacon Alexander Lajos, who had not previously opposed the movement²⁷⁹, being summoned to the church in September 1947.²⁸⁰ This was followed a month later by a circular letter in May 1947 from Gyula Bary, who by then had already become a Reformed Church regional commissioner, in which he also referred to the state leadership's attitude towards the aforementioned revival movement: 'He states that the state government has not rewarded the many and varied incitements of the so-called Circle of Friends, and that, in fact, without proper mandate or authorization, its actions, which have the character of fishing in the mud, have been clearly dropped.'²⁸¹ At the beginning of October, the KGB²⁸² began to summon and interrogate the young people attending the Bible study group, and in the middle of the month, Barna Horkay and József Zimányi were arrested.

His arrest, detention on remand and sentencing

On 16 October 1947, Lieutenant Fedotov, the chief operational officer of the Vinohrady's District Department of the Ministry of State Security²⁸³, following an examination²⁸⁴ of the material received, ordered the arrest of Barna Horkay and a search warrant to be carried out on him. He was also

278 Fodor: Who are the great, 178–179.

279 As far as we know, of the three deacons, only his opinion is known about the movement before 1947, according to which during his visitations in 1946, "*Mr. Deacon notes with satisfaction the spiritual awakening movement that began in 1945 in the Verbőc congregation,*" where József Csík, a pastor of the Friendship Circle, was the head of the congregation. In Tiszaújlak, where another friendly pastor, Zoltán Kovács, was serving, during his visit to the deanery on 7 May 1946, the dean "*...is pleased to note and heartily approves of the revival movement in our diocese.*" *Presbytery minutes of the Reformed Church of Verbőc*, 9 April 1946 and *Presbytery minutes of the Reformed Church of Tiszaújlak*, 7 May 1946.

280 KRELM, I. 10.c. *Lajos Sándor máramaros-ugaocsai esperes 22/1947. számú, 1947. április 8-án kelt körlevele.*

281 Abbreviated name for the State Security Office.

282 KRELM, I. 10.c. *Bary Gyula Református egyházi területi megbízott 3/1947. számú, 1947. májusában kelt körlevele*

283 Shortened version of Nagyszőlős.

284 This suggests that they had been watching the pastor for some time and collecting material on him.

ordered to be detained in order to prevent his possible escape. The latter document also states that Barna Horkay is suspected of having committed an offence under USSR Criminal Code 54-14tc²⁸⁵. At approximately 12 p.m. on 17 October, the authorities began a search of the house, collected any items deemed suspicious, and informed his wife that she should prepare a change of underwear and food for her husband, as they were taking him with them. At midnight, they boarded a train to Uzshorod, bound for the KGB. It is noteworthy that at the time of his detention, Barna Horkay had left his pregnant wife and their two children at home.

In Uzshorod, he is initially held in pre-trial detention, where he is questioned for the first time after five days. The interrogation is conducted by the head of the Subcarpathian Regional Investigation Department of the Ministry of State Security, Major Stroganov.²⁸⁶ He is charged with serious offences and is regularly interrogated, as are people in his entourage. He remained in pre-trial detention for several months, until January 1948, during which time he does not recall being physically abused. Instead, he describes other methods of coercion, including being placed in a cell with six beds and six other people. He is given two options: either sleep on the floor or share his bed with another detainee. On occasion, he is detained for extended periods in the interrogation room without being questioned. However, he is taken for walks each morning, albeit under the cover of darkness, which

285 The two documents mentioned above can be found in the file of the case files of József Zimányi and Barna Horkay Zimányi, marked F.P.2258., op.1., od.zb.5983, Delo C-2274, in the Uzshorod Archive of the State Security Office of Ukraine. *Gusztáv Fodor: Akik a nagy nyomorúságból jöttek... A sztálini diktatúra koncepció s pere i kárpátaljai református lelkészek ellen a KGB ungvári levéltárának dokumentumai alapján. Peranyagok, életrajzi adatok, fényképek.* Kárpátaljai Református Egyház – Református Közéleti és Kulturális Központ Alapítvány, Debrecen, 2017. 153–165 és 193–220.

286 You can read more about this in Barna Horkay's memoirs, which can be summarised as follows: 1. he was a member of the Veres military conspiracy, 2. he was a member of the Eastern Circle of Friends, founded in 1946, whose aim was to extend Hungary's borders eastwards at the expense of the Soviet Union, 3. he participated in the deportation of Jews and the confiscation of their property, 4. he was a confidant of the Hungarian gendarmes, 5. he participated in the forced Hungarianisation of Ukrainians between 1939 and 1944, 6. he was a member of the Circle of Friends of the East, founded in 1946, whose aim was to extend Hungary's borders eastwards at the expense of the Soviet Union. The first five charges were quickly dropped: he did not even know who Veres was, the Circle of Friends of the East was founded in 1936 and its members were not politically active, he did not participate in the deportation of Jews, he did not take their property, the gendarmes only came to see him when they had to check some data from the register, he did not speak Ukrainian, and his supporters were all Hungarians.

provides minimal sunlight. Despite not having his Bible, he engages in spiritual discourse with his cellmates upon learning of his status as a pastor. He receives a weekly food parcel from his family, which he shares with his cellmates, who also have a positive attitude towards him and do not allow him to sleep on the floor. The parcels help him learn that his third child, Samuel, has just been born.²⁸⁷ His wife writes the child's name on the parcel as the sender, as she cannot write a letter.

The official indictment against him is made on 18 January 1948. *"In 1936, he was an active member of the "Brothers of the East" club and engaged in anti-Soviet activities. As an organizer and leader of the circle of preacher training and the "Followers of Christ" society, he educated young people in the spirit of Reformed fanaticism, thus separating them from participation in the cultural-enlightenment and socio-political life organized by the Soviet state and party organizations in the village. He was the instigator of the compilation and sending of an anti-Soviet letter addressed to a leader of the Soviet government, [...] i.e. he committed the offences under Articles 54-10, para. 2, 109 and 196 of the Criminal Code of the USSR".*²⁸⁸ The "Brothers of the East" club referenced in the indictment is likely to be interpreted as the Eastern Circle of Friends, and the missionary movement is designated as anti-Soviet. The establishment of a Bible school in Gece is regarded as an act of subversion against the regime, and the pastor's testimony to the authorities is also denounced, characterising it as a letter addressed to a leader of the Soviet government. In essence, the atheist state power accuses the religious group of religious fanaticism for activities that are an integral part of the pastoral profession. The sentence proposed by Major Stroganov, as mentioned above, is 10 years' imprisonment in a correctional labour camp.

Following his transfer from the police/KGB prison to another prison in Uzhhorod on 21 January 1948, Barna Horkay found himself in a facility where, in addition to political prisoners, there were also prisoners of public order. Those who had completed their interrogation were transferred to this prison, where they were usually tried within two weeks. It is noteworthy that Barna Horkay was transferred to this prison on the same day as József Zimányi, who had been arrested the day before and faced similar charges. Despite having been held in the same prison for almost half a year, the two individuals in question only spent two weeks in the same cell. Barna Horkay awaited his trial daily for several months, but was never called.

²⁸⁷ Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 157–160.

²⁸⁸ Fodor: Akik a nagy, *ibid.* 161–162.

It was not until later that he discovered the reason for this: the absence of any tangible physical evidence against him, and his case being referred to the Special Council under the Ministry of State Security of the Soviet Union for sentencing. This council was responsible for ruling on cases of indeterminacy.²⁸⁹ On 15 May 1948, the pastor's case was adjudicated, and he was convicted of the offences delineated in Articles 54-10, Part II, 109 and 196 of the USSR Criminal Code. He was sentenced²⁹⁰ to seven years' imprisonment in a correctional labour camp, a sentence that was also imposed on József Zimányi. It is important to note that there was no possibility of appeal, and the prisoners were kept in a state of constant anticipation while awaiting the unknown destination of their future exile.²⁹¹

In the camp

The departure occurred in mid-June 1948²⁹², and Barna Horkay and József Zimányi, along with several other prisoners, including four individuals of Hungarian origin, were initially transferred to the distribution camp in Lemberg, a former military barracks. Upon their arrival, a thorough screening process was conducted, during which Horkay lost sight of his fellow travellers. Due to the overcrowded conditions in his housing, he found it difficult to sleep at night, as the room was frequently plagued by thieves. The following day, they reunited with Zimányi and other acquaintances²⁹³, and managed to reach their place, albeit to find it overcrowded, with seventy-two people in the room, leaving only a narrow space for sleeping. During his time in Lemberg, he encountered numerous rabbis of Hungarian origin, and a doctor from Mukačevo, who was also a prisoner at the medical clinic. The doctor attempts to provide them with medical care, treating them for scabies and applying ointment. The ointment is unpleasant but it allows them to sleep comfortably.²⁹⁴ József Zimányi is the first to be sent to the distribution camp, and then he too is put on the wagon, the only Hungarian there. The wagon contains bunk beds, so there is not much space. They proceed steadily, their first stop being the city of Omsk, where they have the opportunity to bathe in the city. Their next stop is Novosibirsk, where there

289 Fodor: *Akik a nagy*, *ibid.* 163.

290 Fodor: *Akik a nagy*, *ibid.* 198.

291 Horkay: *A Keleti*, *ibid.* 163.

292 Today known as Lviv (Львів), it is the capital of a county neighbouring Subcarpathia.

293 One man's foot was on the other man's head.

294 A group of prisoners on the move.

was also a distribution camp, and they spend a week there before being transferred to Buchta-Vanyina on the Pacific coast.²⁹⁵

At the medical clinic, he encounters Gusztáv Menczer, a medical student from Budapest who is also a prisoner there and assisting the camp doctor. Due to his benevolence, he only receives half of the recommended dose of typhus vaccine, in order to avoid the risk of fever. He remained in this location until June 1949, when he was relocated by boat with 1,500 other prisoners to Magadan, a port city situated on the Sea of Okhotsk, located 1,400 km north of the original site. During October of that year, he and 20 of his companions were transported further north to the Kolima region, an area of the Taiga that had only been reached the previous year. Their assigned task was the construction of a new hut, located adjacent to an existing, smaller structure. In March 1950, he was able to depart from this area, which was deemed unsuitable for human habitation, due to his deteriorating health. The combination of extreme cold, arduous labour and inadequate nutrition had significantly compromised his physical condition, resulting in his transfer to a medical facility in Nekszikán, situated 320 kilometres to the south.²⁹⁶ As far as can be ascertained, he will remain in this settlement until his release.

The camps Barna Horkay visited shared several similarities: hard physical labour, poor food, cold conditions, poor public safety, and diseases that were more easily contracted by a weakened body and more difficult to treat.

In Vanyina, he was tasked with digging deep holes in the frozen ground or arranging piles of felled pine trunks. In Magadan, he was employed in the drying room of the camp baths, and during his time in Tajga, he served as the barrack supervisor, responsible for cleaning, heating and cooking for his fellow campers. A significant challenge he faced was the provision of fire and water, a task made arduous by the snow-covered landscape and temperatures of around -60°C. The most arduous aspect of his work was the cleaning of a small factory in Nyeksikian, where he was employed on night shifts, which made the work dangerous. The distinction between political and public camps was marked by a significant disparity in discipline and security. In political camps, prisoners were escorted by guards at all

295 Бухта Ванина /Buhta Vanina/, a port town on the shore of the Tatar Strait (Sea of Okhotsk). i.m. : Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 163–165.

296 Nyksikian is one of the smaller settlements in the Magadan area, which is located on the A.D. 62°N, 147°E, so the area 320 km north of it, referred to in Barna Horkay's memoirs as Kolima or Tajga, must be somewhere near the Arctic Circle. This is also suggested by the fact that the pastor experienced the phenomenon of the aurora borealis several times during his imprisonment in the camp.

times, public security was robust, and there was minimal risk of theft or violence from fellow prisoners. Conversely, prisoners in public camps were sometimes permitted to go unescorted, however, the most formidable prisoners were able to steal from others, and their own lives were not secure. In Nekszikán, after completing their sentences in the public camps, prisoners remained in the settlement. If they desired something, the lives of others were of little concern to them. On two separate occasions, Barna Horkay was subjected to threats against his person, both times occurring when he was en route to his place of employment and assailed by robbers wielding a knife. A third incident, involving the theft of his outer garments, also occurred, and this, in the extreme cold of -56°C, was equally perilous.²⁹⁷

On each occasion, he was miraculously saved, for which he expressed gratitude towards a higher power. For an individual accustomed to temperate climates, temperatures of -50 to -60°C are not only unusual but also unfamiliar²⁹⁸, and it is one to which he must adapt, with the necessary practices to protect against them, and sometimes at his own expense. On one occasion, Barna Horkay sought to complete a task that required him to cover a greater distance more quickly. He ran in the cold, and almost froze his nose as a result. On other occasions, he was perplexed by the behaviour of people on the street who pointed to their faces when he passed them; he was white from the cold, they warned him. In addition to the cold, the poor diet was also taking its toll on the man's health. *"Sometimes we stayed hungry after lunch. It was good to eat the discarded fish bones under the table. Canned fish bones are edible,"* recalls the pastor.²⁹⁹ Upon arriving in Nekeshkian, the circumstances improved marginally, as he was able to write letters home and his family was able to send him food parcels.³⁰⁰ Prior to this, he had only been able to write to his family once, and received a reply informing him that his daughter Erzsike was very ill. For a year and a half after that, he had no contact with his loved ones. This period of uncertainty is characterised by a persistent contemplation

297 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 163–195.

298 From Nyksik to Ojmiak, the "cold pole" of the Northern Hemisphere is only 265 km away.

299 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 172.

300 Prior to this, he had only been able to write a single epistle to his place of residence, which had been answered by a reply informing him that his daughter Erzsike was gravely ill. Thereafter, she experienced a period of no communication with her family and friends that lasted for a year and a half. During this time, she existed in a state of uncertainty regarding the events that had transpired.

on the most suitable course of action for the child. However, a turning point emerges when a promise is fulfilled, as illustrated by the words of Job 5:24, which state, “You will know that your tent is secure; you will take stock of your property and find nothing missing.” This promise signifies the healing of Erzsike, the daughter of the pastor.

On each occasion he was miraculously saved, he thanked God for preserving his life.

The enhancement of working conditions and the provision of home packages have had a positive impact on Barna Horkay’s health, with fewer illnesses being experienced and less frequent hospitalisation. During his years of travel and residence in various camps, the pastor was hospitalised on multiple occasions for ailments including jaundice, scurvy and heart weakness. However, when reflecting on these illnesses, he does not perceive them as a form of retribution, but rather as divine guidance. During his hospitalisation, he is temporarily relieved from the arduous physical work in the winter months.³⁰¹ During the eight years that Barna Horkay is compelled to be away from his place of residence, he encounters numerous individuals from diverse geographical locations, speaking a variety of languages, and holding different religious beliefs and perspectives on life. In most cases, when they learn that he is a pastor, they look at him with respect, regardless of denomination or language, and ask him to speak to them from the Bible. The pastor is happy to take the opportunity to confess his faith, which has landed him in a camp. On rare occasions, he is challenged because of his convictions, or even scowled at because of his nationality. However, irrespective of his circumstances, he consistently finds support from his peers, who, whether Hungarian or Sub-carpathian, sometimes even Hungarian-born, offer assistance or stand by him in times of need. During his stay in Nykszikany, he developed a close friendship with György Csanaki, a soldier of Pilismarót who was forcibly removed from Uzhorod by the Soviet authorities in 1945.³⁰² In addition to this individual, there were several other Hungarians residing in the settlement; however, these individuals remain unnamed in the published memoirs.

301 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 167, 171.

302 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 163–195.

Following his release from the camp on 24 June 1953 with a time permit³⁰³, he was not permitted to return home, and so he took up temporary employment in Nyeksikan as a night watchman at the central pharmacy and a day watcher for a young child while his parents were at work. He now receives a salary to support his family. More than two years later, his wife informed him by letter that several people had recently returned from the camp/exile. Consequently, Barna Horkay sought authorisation to return home from the police in Nykesikan and then in the neighbouring Suszumán. On 20 August 1955, he was granted permission to return home.

The return journey from Nykosia, which is located 6,800 km as the crow flies from Vinohragyiv, entailed a total travel time of 37 days and a total distance of approximately 17,000 km for Barna Horkay, even if he had opted for the direct flight from Magadan to Habarovsk, bypassing the more lengthy and unpredictable sea route. While this option is undoubtedly more expensive, it does offer greater speed and safety.³⁰⁴ From there, he proceeded by train. After several weeks and multiple transfers, he arrives home in Vinohragyiv on the morning of 7 September 1955.

Home again

Following an eight-year period of absence, he is reunited with his family, including his son, Samuel, who is able to meet his father in person for the first time. He expresses contentment in seeing his wife, children and elderly father, despite the numerous difficulties and illnesses they have endured during his absence. The old congregation also expresses joy at his return; the pastorate was vacant at the time. Sándor Lajos, former deacon of Máramaros-Ugocsa, who had relocated from Фанчикове /Fancsikove/ (Fancsika) to Vinohragyiv in 1949, passed away that year. Béla Szabó, a pastor from Перехрестя /Perehresztya/ (Tiszakeresztúr), who is also applying for the vacant post, is serving as deputy pastor.³⁰⁵ Following a unanimous vote by the Council of Twenty, Barna Horkay

303 Those who successfully completed their daily work assignments beyond the prescribed threshold, that is to say, at a rate of 100%, were granted a reduction in their period of incarceration by a single day. This initiative was implemented with the objective of reducing the overall duration of imprisonment within the camp.

304 Horkay: A Keleti, *ibid.* 192–194.

305 The name of the twenty-member congregational council that served as the presbytery during the Soviet era.

was elected as pastor, a decision that was subsequently confirmed by the congregation, approved by the relevant state authorities, and acknowledged by the church leadership.³⁰⁶ The installation/re-inauguration of Horkay as pastor took place on 18 October 1955.

Following their release from internment in the camps, from 1955 onwards, pastors gradually returned and resumed their ministry. However, there was an absence of training for new pastors, and the older pastors gradually withdrew from active ministry, thus resulting in a significant shortage of pastors. Concurrently, Barna Horkay began serving in an increasing number of congregations: from 1955 in Fancsikove, then from 1966 in Чорний Потік /Csornij Potyik/ (Feketepatak) and Матійово /Matyijovo/ Mátyfalva, from 1967 in Perehresztya, and from 1972 in Нове Село /Nove Szelo/ (Tiszaújhely). He also served as deacon from 1956 until his retirement.³⁰⁷ Despite not owning a car, he would often travel to these congregations by bicycle, and would use public transport for the remaining journey. He carried out the duties entrusted to him in six parishes in parallel, and with unwavering dedication and humility. Following his return from captivity, he and his wife had three more daughters, Margaret, Anna and Martha. Their eldest son, Barna, passed away in 1976.

Following his retirement at the age of seventy-nine, several young pastors were already working in various congregations of Subcarpathia as a result of the local pastor training programme that had been initiated³⁰⁸ earlier. In the same year, 1987, he relocated with his family to Tiszaeszlár, Hungary, to reside with his daughter and son-in-law, where he continued his pastoral ministry for a further ten years. On 29 June 1989, the Subcarpathian Regional Prosecutor's Office under No. 13/67 rehabilitated him as a victim of political repression for lack of criminal offence.³⁰⁹ In 1992, the Reformed Theological Academy of Sárospatak awarded him the title of honorary teacher. Five years later, he and his wife relocated to Sárospatak, and in 1998, at the age of ninety, he authored his memoirs entitled *The Eastern Circle of Friends*, in which, in addition to recounting the major milestones of his life, his testimony of his faith also plays an important role.

306 Horkay: A Keleti, ibid. 196–198.

307 Fodor: Akik a nagy, ibid. 167.

308 The Soviet authorities have not granted permission for the study of theology in Hungary by young people. However, those who have been invited to do so study under the supervision of the bishop and deans for a limited period of time.

309 Fodor: Akik a nagy, ibid. 167.

“Since he has no more business here, He brings the treasures of his gratitude to the Lord, where they are so many... And where the Lord says, ‘My son!’”.³¹⁰ This quote by Lajos Füle can be found on his headstone in the Reformed cemetery in Sárospatak.

³¹⁰ Fodor: Akik a nagy, *ibid.* 167.

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Publisher / Vydavateľ: J. Selye University / Univerzita J. Selyeho

Prepress / Tlačová príprava: Nemethgrafik



Liszt Intézet
Magyar Kulturális Központ Pozsony

Online accesess

First published / Rok vydania: 2025

First edition / Prvé vydanie

Online ISBN: 978 - 80 - 8122 - 528 - 4