

FERENC KÖLCSEY AND THE POLISH QUESTION (1831–1834)

ISTVÁN CSAPLÁROS
Unwersytet Warszawski, Warszawa

Antecedents

The first two partitions of Poland (1772, 1793), the Kosciusko revolution, the third partition (1795) and the establishment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw were all events that aroused the interest and to some extent the sympathy of Hungarian nobles and intellectuals.¹ Manifestations of this sympathy and solidarity in Hungarian literature, however, were confined to a small group of journalists, writers and poets who rarely went beyond showing their compassion.

But one can hardly blame them; Hungary's self determination ("independence" would be an exaggeration) within the Austrian Empire had just been clipped further; the execution of the leaders of the so called Jacobin movement in Hungary (1794–95) was naturally followed by hostile oppression. The scant "control" exercised by the Hungarian Diet over Habsburg absolutism had evaporated to nothing by the time of its suspension from 1811 to 1825. The next "authorized" Diet (1825–27) was equally ineffectual in political terms though it did, to its merit, establish the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The same kind of "activity" characterized the Diet of 1830, which was only able to sit for four months. Fearing a revolt similar to the French, Belgian and Swiss uprisings of the time, the Court in Vienna and the Hungarian landed gentry nevertheless "found each other" once again through murky legislative dealings that had one single goal: to curtail freedom.

Still, when the 1831 uprisings broke out in Poland things were somewhat different. A national movement to help the Poles swept the country, and echos and after-effects of this movement were kept alive all the way up to the Hungarian revolution for independence in 1848. The peasants' revolt in Galicia in 1846 was only additional fuel to the fire and the Hungarians were quick to learn their lesson: you cannot start a war of independence "for city folks only", the peasants must be freed too.

One of the finest representatives of these reform era (1825–1848) aspirations in the early 1830s was Ferenc Kölcsey who, by wanting to help the Poles, also wanted to change a few things at home.

Kölcsey, who had a tragically short life (August 8, 1790 – August 24, 1838), was first and foremost a poet and writer, but is also well known as an outstanding reform politician, famous orator and one of the founders and most important figures of Hungarian criticism. Kölcsey's sympathy with the Polish cause is in harmony with his

patriotic-poetic vein and with the humanity of his character. A look at the life and work of this man should give us a clearer picture of the latter.

In contrast to other politicians of the period, he had spent the greatest part of his life in the country, on his family estate in Cseke, Szatmár county. His staying there was probably motivated by financial and family circumstances.

In his best poems, he pluckily protests against Habsburg despotism. In a poem of 1817, *Rákóczi, haj. . .* (Rákóczi, ah. . .) he commemorates Ferenc Rákóczi, leader of the early 18th century revolt against Vienna. It was also Kölcsey who wrote the first great national lyrical works in Hungary in the 1820s. At this time his poetry consisted of patriotic odes to freedom, and of lyric songs drawn partly from folk-poetry. He was at his poetic and lyrical best when Vienna suspended the Hungarian Diet in 1811 for 14 years, and "governed" by decrees. His poem *Rákos* (1821) is a passionate appeal to wake up the nation. As a result of another series of anticonstitutional Austrian moves he wrote one of his greatest, and certainly most indelible works, the *Hymnus* (Hymn) the later musicalized version of which is Hungary's national anthem, that recalls the long suffering of the Hungarian people, but hopes for a better tomorrow. . . . Written three months later, in April 1823, *Zsarnok* (Tyrant) courageously lays bare the oppressors, while the lyric dialogue *Igazság* (Truth) is probably the avant-courier of Kölcsey the politician, who will later speak out for equality before the legislation. In his ode *A szabadsághoz* (To Freedom) he yearns for the same as only a lover could for his mistress. In his *Rebellis vers* (Rebel's poem) he openly inculpates his generation: if we, the descendants, do not follow the example of the Zrínyis, the Rákóczis and the Jacobins then they have all died for nothing.

Turning towards literature, in 1826 he wrote an essay entitled *Nemzeti hagyományok* (National Traditions), a milestone in the identification of Hungarian literature at the reform-age. Its essence is that all literature should be based on historically understood traditional and even folk-poetry. His best friends at that time were Pál Szemere (1785–1851) the poet, aesthete and critic, and László Bártfay (1797–1858), a lawyer and literary patron, whose house – later a fashionable literary saloon in Pest – was also the meeting place of writers from all over the country.

Kölcsey's public life began in 1827 with his election by Szatmár county heads to deputy clerk. His reports written for county assemblies center on the problems of the people. *A szatmári adózó nép állapotáról* (The state of the common Szatmár tax payer) (1830) speaks of the poverty of the serfs, while in *A sorsvónás tárgyában* (On the Questions of Draft by Drawing Lots) he recommends the selection of soldiers by drawing lots rather than by just simply catching them and browbeating them into the army. Thus, a picture of Kölcsey the truth seeker already emerges. In the summer of 1830, as a guest of the Szemere family at Szobránc, he wrote the *Zrínyi éneke* (Zrínyi's Canto), a lyrical dialogue,² and one of the most effective displays of Kölcsey's patriotic feelings.

**Kölcsey as head of the pro-Polish movement in
Szatmár county**

According to the historian István Barta, it must have been Kölcsey's influence and doing that in 1830 — months before the outbreak of the rebellion in Poland! — delegates of the Diet demanded independence for Poland.³ The Diet had convened on September 8th 1830, but could hardly last with such ideas, and was abruptly closed by the end of the year. Meanwhile the so-called "November uprising"⁴ had broken out in Poland, an uprising which was nothing more than a "conservative revolution", a revolt by the nobles, but without the intention of freeing the mass of serfs.

Austria had opted for a policy of "wait and see" — they had to consider a sizable Polish population in Galicia too. On the other hand, seeing that it was a revolt by the gentry, Hungary zealously endorsed the Polish cause. The Hungarian press, although not unanimously, provided long and detailed coverage of the events. But sympathy was also expressed in other ways. Without a Diet, the county meetings had become the most important political forums. The gentry's public opinion was best expressed for posterity by a writer named, Sándor Ujfalvi (1782—1866): "By sympathizing with the Polish cause the Hungarian nation has relived her own ideal revolution (. . .), the poet, the politician, the county judge had been complacent, for until then independence had been something unattainable to them."⁵

One of the initiators of the pro-Polish sentiments was Bars county. On May 3, 1831 their General Assembly addressed a petition to the King, and sent copies to the other Hungarian county-meetings. The address cited the common past of Hungary and Poland, Sobieski's victory in Vienna in 1683 and Poland's position as one of the main strongholds against the Russian Empire. Hence, they asked the King to discuss the matter with representatives of the Hungarian nation during the next special session of the Diet on the Polish question consult. By the summer of 1831 a total of 33 counties sent similar notes to the King.⁶

Kölcsey's county, Szatmár, held its General Assembly on June 13, 1831. Items on the agenda, in order of importance, were: (1) The grievances of the gentry; (2—3) The Polish question; (4) The reunification of Hungary and Transylvania; (5) To make Buda the residence of the Diet; and (6) The right to use the Hungarian language in public life. Thus it is obvious that the Polish question took precedence over a number of important Hungarian national issues.

The motion on the Polish question was of course drafted by deputy clerk Kölcsey. This text is important, for he was to repeat many of its arguments in his later speeches (e.g. in those of the 20th and 23rd November, 1833). In essence it charted the course to be taken by Hungarians in three areas: (1) the collection of money, linen, lints and crops for the Poles until the end of July; (2) petition to the King; and (3) an answer to Bars county's call.

For us, of course, the most interesting is the *Pro Memoria* written by Kölcsey to the King.

"May Your Imperial and Royal Majesty be humbly asked to kindly patronize the

Polish nation, which is not only our neighbour, but is connected with Hungary by many kinships and a common past, and which has been a retreat for uncounted ostracized Hungarians for centuries; which has graciously accepted our Kings and had given us Kings; which heroically saved Vienna, meaning at the time the salvation of Christianity and of ourselves, and which is a natural bastion against the wanton expansionism of the Russian rulers. Please do not permit Poland to be oppressed by force as she fights for the civil rights guaranteed by Your Majesty in 1814; do not permit her to succumb in a war that — in the full view of Europe and in a century that extols humanity — may well mean their end. Your advocacy could save this endangered nation. We also beg you to free the Polish soldiers who, fleeing the Russians, have been apprehended in your Majesty's territories, as well as to consider sending home the officers of Russian-Polish origin who now serve under Your Majesty's flag."

Offended in their dignity, the Szatmár officials put on record the fact that they had taken a stand in the Polish question long before reading the rousing letter from Bars, and had already "asked for the interference of our Emperor", and had also taken up collections "to the utmost of our ability." They informed Bars county of this, "if only to demonstrate that there are others too who bear similarly human and fraternal instincts in their hearts"⁷.

Another, somewhat more detailed, petition in Latin had also been sent to the King. This was also Kölcsey's doing and bears the same date as the work mentioned above. The most important links in its chain of ideas went something like this: a good neighbour fights for her freedom. The Poles have helped the sons of the Árpád dynasty as well as other Hungarians in the course of history. They had consented to the reign of Hungarian kings several times and had also given kings to Hungary. The Poles rescued Vienna from the Turks, and are a natural buffer zone against the Russian giant.

But the petition also considers the present. "We should not stand by the devastation of the country of our brothers and sisters. . ." It is obvious that "they only want to uphold the laws and rights guaranteed also by Your Majesty in 1814." The Szatmár nobles were also aware of the looming Russian Bear, "who has been growing more menacing by the day, especially since the premature partition of Poland." On the other hand, if the Poles were not backed soon, Hungary might also be attacked (by Russia). As to small countries having already won their freedom, they cite the Belgian example. They repeat over and over again: "Poland can be the stronghold of Europe". The Szatmarians also ask for the discharge of the Polish soldiers captured in Hungary and of the officers of Polish origin serving in the monarchical army, stating benevolently: "it would be a consolation for them to die at least among their relatives, while defending their own country"⁸.

As always, Kölcsey informed his best friends of his political steps. In a letter to László Bártfay on July 2nd, he wrote that Bártfay could read "the proposals on Poland that had been sent to the Palatine".*⁹ Kölcsey also became a member of a

**Palatine* the highest administrative official in feudal Hungary before 1848.

committee nominated by Szatmár county General Assembly. The committee's task was to establish a relief fund to help the poor in Poland as well as to try to influence the Polish economy in keeping prices down. (Other distinguished members of the committee included Baron Miklós Wesselényi, the outstanding politician and publicist of the reform era, and Mihály Eötvös who later became a representative of Szatmár county in the national Diet). The proposals of the committee were once again drafted by Kölcsey.¹⁰ As deputy clerk of Szatmár county, he informed Bárfay that "this county fund has become the foundation stone of a new Poland (for there is no such a thing at the moment), which would supply the poor with cheap food in hard times".¹¹ The amount of about 5000 forints was going to be sent to the Polish revolutionaries by Count György Károlyi.¹² After the suppression of the Polish revolution, Vienna began to reprimand the counties that had wanted to help the Poles. The Court also rejected the argument about the Russian threat, not to mention the "Belgian example", and the 1815 Vienna agreement on constitutional guarantees.¹³ The political lessons of the years 1830–31 are aptly drawn in the final lines of Kölcsey's epigram, *Huszt*:

És mond: Honfi mit ér epedő kebel e' romok' ormán?
 Régi kor' árnya felé visszamerengni mit ér?
 Messze jövendővel komolyan vess össze jelenkort:
 Hass, alkoss, gyarapíts; 's a' haza fényre derül!"¹⁴

("And tell me, my compatriots: what's the use to cry over ruins?
 What is the use of musing back to the shadows of bygone worlds?
 Measure seriously instead the present with yonder future:
 Affect, create, enrich; and our homeland will prosper!")

Setting the stage for the debate on Poland in the Diet of 1832–36

During preparations for the 1832–36 sessions of the Diet, the 13th point of the Szatmár county delegates stated: "The King's answer to the Polish question should be urged, for it has been listed as a national grievance for a year".¹⁵ County representatives were Ferenc Kölcsey as first delegate, and Mihály Eötvös. The poet and politician Kölcsey's goals are well known: a free and united Hungarian nation.¹⁶ Elected to be delegate on November 6, 1832, he arrived in Pozsony where he would record his impressions in a diary closing with the date August 19, 1833. The quotations from this diary serve to demonstrate that Kölcsey was much more moderate and realistic than some of the more irascible delegates.

On one of the so called regional assemblies on December 28 (preparatory meetings of the Danube and Tisza districts), several delegates, like János Balogh of Bars, Imre Pécsi of Sáros, and László Pálóczy of Borsod counties, suggested to debate the Polish

question, especially since his Majesty had failed to respond.¹⁷ Chief delegate Zoltán Dókus promised to collect and submit the grievances once again.¹⁸

During the debate the Borsod delegate, Pálóczy, claimed that the 30 000 odd Hungarian gentries of his county "are ready for all sacrifices, if only summoned legally".¹⁹ Kőlcsey well knew what such proclamations really meant. His bitter diary remark reads: "... those 30 000 nobles from Borsod offered by Pálóczy and the other 700 000 we have in the country will make a very small army once words are translated into deeds. . . We don't know one another well enough, my friends! Just seeing a bare chest doesn't mean that there is also a heart in it".²⁰

Kőlcsey's Diet Diary also deals with two texts concerning Polish emigration. One of them was addressed to count Borsiczky, Lord Lieutenant of Trencsén county, the other to the Hungarian nation and the Diet in Latin and Hungarian. This latter was read by Siskovics, the delegate of Baranya county, on the 11th of January, 1833. In reply, the Poles expressed ardent gratitude for the Hungarian's compassion, and asked for further support. Kőlcsey's clear-sightedness is reflected in his diary note of the same day: "Men of the scuttled country; we bear your sufferings in our hearts; we shall deliver daring, shiny speeches in your favour; we shall even address favour; we shall even address His Majesty for sympathy; and what can be gained from all this if Louis Philippe of France and his people have let you down; and if in Wilson's country (i.e. in England) not a single man has taken to arms, what could be expected of our nation that buckles its sword only at parades and even then without foundation."²¹ Palatine Joseph had heard of the affair, but enjoying an annuity (for his deceased second wife, Alexandra Pavlovna) from the Czar he had to avoid the calamities of presiding over a session that would patronize the Poles. So he simply summoned Borsiczky (20th January) and asked for the text of the Polish call.²²

The regional meeting on January 22nd decided to postpone the Polish question.²³ It was not before June 26 that the subject came up again. Kőlcsey doesn't fail to comment on the Polish text in question that wasn't returned by the Palatine. On the other hand, on June 26 it was decided that another, "properly worded" memorandum should be submitted. Once prepared the document was read the grievance committee on June 28th,²⁴ then a few days later, on July 1st studied at a session of the Upper House.²⁵

By then Kőlcsey's speeches dealt with other important issues of internal policy, such as the right of officially using the Hungarian language, and the freedom of religions. It was at this time that he wrote his masterly patriotic epigram, *Emléklapra* (On a memorial leaf).

Négy szócskát üzenek, vésd jól kebeledbe, 's fiadnak
Hagyd örökül, ha kihunysz: A HAZA MINDEN ELŐTT.²⁶

("I send but four small words, engrave them in your hearts
And bequeath them to your sons: YOUR NATION COMES FIRST."²⁷)

Kölcsey was not physically strong and his frail health was weakened by the constant bickerings with Vienna and the conservative nobles. But he gained new strength from the struggle and grit of the Poles in difficult times²⁷. On July 13th he wrote in his diary: "As far as I am concerned: I am shaken by the vicissitudes of the past days, and my swan song was chanted amongst the phenomena of hot fever. But what happened is nothing compared to Poland's fate. These heroes have withstood many more far graver things. And is it a consolation? Or is any hope for their resurrection still cherished? If there is, then our cause may not be lost either. Well done, my dear friends! He who hopes, also believes; and he who believes will find salvation! At least so it is written in the Holy Scripture."²⁸

With August 19th, however, Kölcsey's Diet Diary ends, and thereafter his views on the Polish question can not be traced as authentically as before. He even leaves Pozsony, the seat of the Diet for a while, only to find rest and refuge in the house of his literary and political friend, Bártfay (whose wife is of Polish origin; one of their frequent guests is Dzwonkowski, Károlyi's librarian. . .). On September 9th Szatmár county issues an official recognition of Kölcsey's services as a delegate. He is still resting, but not his poetic pen. On October 7th he writes his poem *Hős* (Hero), obviously on Poland.

Védni menj el engem' és hazád!
Hősnek a' hölgy mond és kardot ad;
Győzve térj meg,
Bucsut így sohajta,
S véled e' kard,
'S ellen' vére rajta!

Hős elindul, lángban kebele
'S fölpirul rá bús harcz' reggele,
Vág, de sebjen
Ömlik drága vére,
Győz, de halva
Hull vert ellenére.

Mécsvilágnál gyöngé hölgy mit vár?
Nap megy és jön, ő nem vissza már!
Karddal együtt,
Mellyet fog kezébe,
Csöndes estvén
Néma sir földé be.

Hős, aludjál! dombod' hantja zöld,
Könnyel ázva nyugtat honni föld;
Érted áldást
Hü kebel sohajta;
Véled a' kard,
'S ellen' vére rajta.²⁹

("Go defend me and our country!
The lady says while handing him a sword;
And return with victories,
So she moans good bye.
You have your sword,
and have the enemy's blood on it!

The hero starts burning for combat,
The dawn looks down at bitter fighting,
It is the end, his blood is spilt,
And though he conquers,
He collapses dead
Right on the enemy.

At candle-light the lady waits, for whom?
Days go and come, only he returns nevermore!
His sword is kept
Still in his hand
Buried in a grave
On a quiet evening. . .

Sleep hero! Your grave is green of grass
Wetted by patriotic tears
A true heart sighs a
Blessing for your soul;
You have your sword
And your enemy's blood on it.")

Still somewhat of a riddle to philologists working on Kölcsey, the *Hero* offers evidence of the early pro-Polish demonstrations, and although it is not of great aesthetic significance (apart from the personality of its author) it is nevertheless an important work. It is a pro-Polish poem, even if its message is somewhat hidden. The poem is probably a direct result of Kölcsey's considerable experience with the Poles in the preceding months. He made some allusions to Polish heroes while he was sick; the solitude at Cseke proved to be favorable to the maturation of the poem. Each stanza corresponds with a phase of the events: the lady's farewell the hero's battle and death, the grief, are all followed by the poet's resigned epilogue. The lines with 9-9-4-6-4-6 syllables (in Hungarian) are marked off by double rhymes, only to be continued by alternate ones. The artistic effect is enhanced by the repetition of the last two lines of the first stanza.

The Polonophile mood was also expressed by other poets of the 1830s. To demonstrate this fact, there is a string of related pieces such as József Bajza's *Vitéz búcsúdala*³⁰ (Hero's Farewell song); Ignác Bustavi-Kunos's *Dallok*³¹ (Songs); Károly Vaskapui Kapuy's *Az elesett lengyel vitézek emléke*³² For the Memory of Fallen Polish Heroes); József Szabó, *A csalogány és a vándor lengyel*³³ (The Nightingale and the Wandering Pole); *Könnyvirág gróf Plater Emilia sirhalmára*³⁴ (Flowers of Tears on Countess Emilia Plater's Grave); *Felkelési táboral*³⁵ (Revolutionary Field Song); then

somewhat later Mihály Vörösmarty's *Egy kibújdosott' végóhajtása*³⁶ (The Fugitive's Dying Wish). These are the early fruits, the masterpieces are yet to come from 1834–35, with József Bajza's *Apotheosis* and Vörösmarty's pro-Polish poems.

Though feeling spent, the recluse of Cseke never lost hope; in fact he prepared further contributions to the Diet on the Polish cause. By the beginning of November Kölcsey was back in Pozsony.

The Polish question before the Diet of 1832–36

It was only on November 20th, 1830 that the regional meeting (the pre-Diet meeting of the two Danube- and Tisza-districts) dealt with constitutional grievances. Bars county delegate János Balogh cited the Polish question as an example of the grievances, since the counties' call of 1831 had been left unanswered by the King. He reminded the Estates that: "the suppression of a free nation in the neighbourhood might endanger our own freedom"... that is "one of the chief guarantees of the constitution of a free nation (i.e. the Hungarian nation) is the maintenance of the freedom of the neighbouring nation"...³⁷

The chairman of the meeting Zmeskál, remarked here that the motion was already before the Grievance Committee, and that as the same thing could not be demanded through two different channels, Balogh's motion should be waived.³⁸ In fact, the Grievance Committee had been considering these and other questions since June 19, 1832.

It was at this critical moment that the author of the *Hymnus* demanded the floor, although, as we know from his Diary, he did not have much hope. Acting in the spirit of his county's directives, he clearly saw the importance of the matter: "Europe is watching our deeds."³⁹ Unable to participate in their struggle as Byron had done in the Greek revolution, we only made collections and called for the King's help... Vainly we cried out and did not succeed; the nation that had worthily been named, together with ourselves, as the bastion of Christianity for centuries, without which the towers of Vienna would have been ruined and her palaces deserted like those of King Matthias Corvinus' salles in Buda Castle — that nation has been beaten down by mighty hands and in full view of the whole world. This was the nation by the partition of which the Russian Czarine Catharine the far-reaching, plunged a dagger into the heart of Europe itself, and the wound, if not cured, might cause universal death. That was the nation* that, through long lasting sufferings achieved, if only partly, a free constitution and in defending it is now completely deprived of it, totally dehumanized."⁴⁰ Then he expounded the moral and national reasoning of his speech: "What were we, honorable Estates and Orders, if we stood by indifferently during the fall of those who, at their graves, look at us with hope and trust? Whose civil lives were ended by their

*i.e. The Warsaw Grand Duchy, founded after the Napoleon Wars in 1807, and the Congressional Kingdom following the Vienna Congress in 1814–15.

expression of gratitude to us, and whose remnants in exile are still begging for our sympathy? What were we, if even the last rattle of their trodden-down liberty could not wake us from our apathy, and we did not raise our voice in a case that affects us so closely and in so many ways?" He concluded his speech by stressing that the King should be called: "What was refused to certain counties should now be done on the unified wish of the nation, ways are to be found to repair the injustice against the Poles".⁴¹

Kölcsey's speech was followed by several sympathetic ones, not one of which merely repeated the above reasoning. Bihar county delegate, Beöthy pointed out that the main source of the disaster had been Constantin, the Grand Duke, whose anti-constitutional deeds led to desperate Polish actions as a consequence of which "Warsaw is fallen and a better future for a civilized Europe is lost with her". A quick show of hands after the debate revealed that the majority of the representatives wished to add the Polish question to the problems laying before the Grievance Committee.⁴²

On the national meeting of November 23rd, in the course of grievance lists, it was again Bars delegate János Balogh who initiated a debate on the Polish issue. At the end of his speech he proposed to humbly ask His Majesty: "our crowned head would graciously help by diplomatic means the resurrection of the Polish nation that had been rubbed out of the wing of nations".⁴³

Session Chairman Pongrác Somsich expressed his hopes that while discussing the prosperity of their own country, they wouldn't be dealing with "external affairs". He called for the rejection of Balogh's motion. But the unshaken pro-Polish representatives lined up one by one, with László Pálóczi, Tamás Eötvös, Antal Szirmay and others speaking out. Pálóczy called attention to the need for the security of the Hungarian frontiers. "From Olmütz to Zimony, the borders of the Austrian Realm are pushed by the Northern Colossus without any protective dam."⁴⁴

Kölcsey came next, emphasizing that the cause the counties stood for in the spring and summer of 1831, should be continued at the level of the Diet, and the monarch should be asked to intervene in the favour of the Poles. "We owe them this, but we owe it to ourselves too. For it can hardly be kept secret that we are also threatened when, at our borders, a free civil constitution is suppressed, whilst the Northern power continues to expand around us.

The fact that the result of the petition could not be foreseen, "was not a reason for keeping silent, and nor is the fact that a mighty European people did not speak up as strongly and effectively as they should have. If they kept silent, it is our nation that has to speak up! Maybe seeing a weak people of not very advantageous status act as they ought to, might be a little spark to generate in their hearts a flame of benefit. Anyhow, it won't be useless to let our feelings and worries be known to our Monarch." Kölcsey then switches to the brave criticism of the government as yet unheard of: "It is well known that those sitting in the cabinet-council rarely see or show things in the light of reality. And the Austrian ministry certainly has not been searching for clear insights since the very beginning of the Polish case." Kölcsey's speech was the first to imply criticism on the foreign policy of the Austrian Monarchy.

This criticism hit right on the touchiest of all international questions, that of the Russian danger. He also dwelled upon the spreading of the Russian Empire since Peter the First, but added that "nowadays it is considered bad manners in high political circles to talk about this, for ministerial people follow a different code of thinking and practice from that of us common people".

Then Kölcsey compared two contradicting facts: the acknowledgement of the freedom of Belgium and the oppression of Poland. Although he knew well that the Estates would hardly convert the ministries, the call of the Hungarian people to the King remembering the 17th century events should not go without notice. "We are praying for our broken neighbour, for the one that in her better ages had defended Vienna and the glory of the Austrian House. And what a contrast, honorable Estates of Realm! Behold, the people that once stood up as a liberator, is now trampled upon and deprived of her freedom; her best men are squandered all over Europe without a fatherland or anything that could make life desirable, that could offer solace at passing away! I've seen one Pole who, seeking refuge in our country, brought with him a handful of Polish soil, and kept it throughout his wandering until he died in his friends' arms at Oporto, as Don Pedro's soldier. The soil was thrown on his closed eyelids by his friend who said: "He is happy at last resting under Polish soil, he won't feel misfortune any more, while his comrades are roaming in the wild Asian deserts, or are knocking on doors in Europe, and accepting the alms of the compassionate, or the hard words of the insensitive with bleeding hearts."

After this recital of the Polish fate, Kölcsey eloquently reminds his fellow delegates of the numerous connections between the two countries and of the times when Hungarians fleeing persecution found asylum in Poland: "Your Estates, look upon the history of the past five centuries! You'll see how many times the Poles had opened their true hearts and gates for Magyars in exile! How many of our forefathers settled down there and gave children to their new country! — And behold, those Poles of Hungarian descent have been bleeding for freedom, have been dragged to the Asian deserts or are leading fugitive lives without comfort abroad together with their Polish brothers!"

It was this intense compassion for the Poles that led him to appeal pathetically to the conscience of his fellow delegates, to bring them into action: "On behalf of humanity tortured to despair, of killed constitutional freedom, of oppressed human rights you are called, Honorable Estates, open your hearts for sympathy, and don't delay to take this small and easy step for those miserable fellows!"⁴⁵

The Diet heard a poet of deep feelings and a politician of far sight. Endre Kovács wrote: "This Diet shows Kölcsey 'fully armed' ethically as well as politically. Piercing irony, rational historical analysis, empathy to other people's fate, mockery and pathos, cool contempt for the reactionary political machinations, and his flowing patriotism are unified in this short but meaningful manifestation, to which hardly any greater monument of the common Hungarian-Polish lot was ever produced by any of us".⁴⁶

In spite of this fiery oratory, however, the majority of the delegates wanted to postpone or even discard the Polish question. It was proposed that more urgent

domestic problems should be debated instead. It was also said that their support for Poland would be no more than a formal demonstration.

Certainly Kölcsey had done his best for the Poles during this Diet. He sent the texts of his speeches to his closest friends. Besides wanting to inform them, he also looked forward to their well deserved appreciation. László Bártfay and Pál Szemere were among the first to receive his letters on November 25th. On the 5th December Bártfay is addressed again: "The Polish cause is lost, just like it had been in London and Paris. Have you received my two speeches? Greetings to that straight and indigent man at your table (Dzwonkowski – I. Cs.), make clear to him what I have said in their support. . . sorry that they were only words!"⁴⁷ Kölcsey's fine sense of tact is shown here; he offers explanations to a Pole he has only known briefly. . . He is equally exasperated in his letter of 5th December to Zsigmond Kende: ". . . we wanted to gain support for that poor nation but failed."⁴⁸ But the Polish question comes up again in the report of Szatmár county delegates Kölcsey and Mihály Eötvös on the 22nd November and 30th December sessions. They emphasize that even if the issue didn't gain majority now, "most of the people in the country want to put the issue, amongst the grievances, before the King in due course".⁴⁹

Echoes

The Polish question remains Kölcsey's favourite subject throughout this session of the Diet, if only to point out its moral lessons to his countrymen.

On the 11th, 20th and 22nd of May 1833 presidential letters were sent to the deputy prefect of counties adjacent to Poland, instructing them to arrest Polish refugees and deport them to Galicia. Ung county delegate, Bernáth, informed the Diet on September 9, 1834 that after the cases of those who had struggled for the Polish constitution had been decided, their peaceful homes were harrassed in search for people in exile.

In the ensuing debate Kölcsey refers to the "extradition agreements by certain heads of state" (i.e. the Münchengraetz accord between Austria and Russia in September 19, 1833), which considered the act by the Poles a deadly sin, albeit the rest of Europe did not. They are innocent indeed. . . for it had been their duty to defend their constitutional rights; this sense of duty made them ready to win or die (. . .) And now behold, Europe has become a prison to them, they are everywhere wanted by bailiffs, and even in Hungary they are hunting them down because of some presidential orders devised by our own elected officials." At this time Kölcsey also asks for an address in the case.

Once again Kölcsey was not left alone. Among others, delegate Somsich bemoaned the fact that "there actually are some shameless people who carry out the presidential orders."⁵⁰

On the other hand, it is Kölcsey himself who blames some negative aspects of the Polish past, such as the dilemma of the *liberum veto*. On the 23rd of October, 1834, in

his speech on cleared woodlands he states: "One cannot take all of it away from the serfs", that the law should be clear on this, "free of juridical counterplots. . ." It is also interesting to note his lucubrations on freedom: "The basis of freedom is to have a majority. What the majority accepts as adequate to the interests of the whole cannot be sacrificed to the independent opinion of certain people. If individuals are given the right of veto that would be the grave of the constitution as was shown by the lamentable failure of our Polish neighbours."^{5 1}

These comments were his last ones on the Polish question which he was able to touch upon and present in an open forum.^{5 2}

Government propaganda depicted him and other liberal delegates as subversives, who were digging the grave of the eight century long constitution of the nobles. Szatmár county also turned away from the liberal reforms, Prefect Vécsey and subprefect Uray were the government's men. One of the additional instructions sent to the delegates at Pozsony on November 4th was to drop the problem of "fee simph", so important to the peasants living as serfs.

The poet-politician Kölcsey made another endeavor by returning to Szatmár county seat, Nagykároly. But he was unable to turn back the wheels of the local political machinery, and saw no other alternative but to resign his seat in Pozsony and say farewell to his fellow-delegates.

In his parting speech he expressed his convictions once more: "Let's give higher standards to the tax paying people, fix land tenure once and for all (. . .) It's high time for both (. . .) Fatherland and progress have been and should remain our slogan."^{5 3}

And in this motto he included everything he fought for: his worries about the fate of the Polish neighbours', his speeches on their behalf, his solidarity. . . for to him the question of the existence of a Poland next to Hungary had never been a matter of indifference.

Notes

1. Csapláros, István: *Sprawy polskie w literaturze węgierskiej epoki Oświecenia*. Warszawa, 1961.; idem: "A lengyel kérdés Kazinczy Ferenc és barátai levelezésében" (The Polish question in the correspondence of Ferenc Kazinczy with his friends). In: Csapláros, István: *A felvilágosodástól a felszabadulásig* (From the age of Enlightenment to Liberation) /Budapest, 1977/, pp. 44-69 and ibid. pp. 70-89: "A lengyel nők hazaszeretete" (The patriotism of Polish women).
2. Horváth, Károly: *Kölcsey Ferenc*. In: *A magyar irodalom története* (The history of Hungarian literature): vol. III. Pándi, Pál ed.: *A magyar irodalom története 1772-1849* (The history of the Hungarian literature from 1772 to 1849) /Budapest, 1965/, pp. 417-430.
3. Barta, István (ed.): *Szatmár megye közgyűléseinek jegyzőkönyve 1830* (The minute book of the Szatmár County Assembly 1830). 1914.; "Kölcsey politikai pályakezdete" (The start of Kölcsey' political career) *Századok* vol. 1959, 2-4, p. 273.
4. Some key literature on the November uprising: Divéky, Adorján: *Magyarok és lengyelek a XIX. században* (Hungarians and Poles in the 19th century) /Budapest, 1919/, pp. 8-19; Lukinich, Imre: "L'insurrection polonaise de 1830 et l'opinion publique hongroise" *Revue des Études Hongroises*, 1933, pp. 193-215; Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés a reformkori Magyarországon* (The Polish question in reform-era Hungary) /Budapest, 1959/, pp. 67-200, pp. 371-404; Király, Béla: "The Hungarian democrats and the Polish question during the 19th century".

- The Polish Review, 1977, 1, pp. 3–177; Csapláros, István: "Der Widerhall der Polenbegeisterung österreichischer und deutscher Dichter in der ungarischen Literatur im Zeitalter der Romantik" *Germanica Wratislaviensia*, vol. XXXIV. 1978, pp. 163–178. Also "Der Widerhall der Polenbegeisterung. . . im Zeitalter der Reformen (1825–1848) und des Freiheitskampfes (1848–1849)" *ibid.* vol. XLV. 1981, pp. 31–41.
5. Ujfalvy, Sándor: *Emlékiratai* (Memoirs). /Kolozsvár, 1941/ p. 333. Quoted after Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés*. . . (The Polish question. . .) p. 87.
 6. Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés*. . . (The Polish question. . .) pp. 87–89.
 7. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Összes művei* (Collected works) /Budapest, 1960/ vol. III. pp. 393–394.
 8. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Minden munkái*, III. bővített kiadás VI. köt. (Collected works, third, enlarged edition) /Budapest, 1886/ vol. VI. pp. 260–263.
 9. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Összes művei* (Collected works) /Budapest, 1960/ vol. III. pp. 393–394.
 10. Barta, István (ed.): *Kölcsey politikai pályakezdetek* (The start of Kölcsey's political career) p. 301.
 11. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Összes művei* (Collected works) /Budapest, 1960/ vol. III. p. 404.
 12. Károlyi, György: *A Károlyi-család nemzetségi levéltára* (The archives of the Károlyi family) Budapest, 1965. Országos Levéltár, pp. 414–932, 8–9–10 letters. The Károlyis and László Bártfay aided Polish refugees in Pest-Buda. See Sawrymowicz, E.: "Kartka z dziejów przyjaźni węgiersko-polskiej" *Slavica* (Debrecen) 1964., pp. 139–153.
 13. Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés*. . . (The Polish Question. . .) *op. cit.* pp. 98–99.
 14. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Minden munkái* (Collected works at the vol. I. Pest, 1840) p. 137.
 15. Notes by Szógyéni, Sándor M. Notarius (Notary) at the Archives of Szatmár-Ugocsa and Bereg counties. Quoted by Kincs, Elek: *Kölcsey a közéletben* (Kölcsey in public life) Szombathely, 1931.
 16. Szauder, József: *Kölcsey Ferenc* (Budapest, 1955) p. 174.
 17. Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési tudóstársok* (Reports from Parliament) (Budapest, 1948) vol. I. pp. 41–43, 50–52.
 18. *ibid.* p. 52.
 19. *ibid.*
 20. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Országgyűlési napló 1832–1833* (Parliamentary diary 1832–1833) Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Minden munkái* (Collected works) vol. VII. (Budapest, 1886) p. 35.
 21. *ibid.* pp. 65–66.
 22. *ibid.* pp. 94–95. *Adres tułaczów polskich w Paryżu bawiących do Sejmu węgierskiego* (Paryż, 1832) XII. 16. Signed by Leleweł etc.
 23. *ibid.* p. 99
 24. *ibid.* p. 300–302.
 25. *ibid.* p. 305.
 26. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Minden munkái* (Collected works) vol. I. p. 145.
 27. Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés*. . . (The Polish question. . .) p. 163.
 28. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Országgyűlési napló*. . . (Parliamentary diary. . .) p. 324.
 29. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Minden munkái* (Collected works) vol. I. pp. 146–147.
 30. *Aurora* (1832) p. 187.
 31. *Koszorú* (1832) p. 64.
 32. *Sas* (1832) vol. XII. p. 70.
 33. *Társalkodó* (approx. Dialogue) July 21, 1832, p. 227.
 34. *Sas* (1833) vol. XIII. p. 111.
 35. *Sas* (1833) vol. XIV. p. 118.
 36. *Aurora* (1834) p. 311.
 37. Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési Tudóstársok* (Reports from Parliament) vol. II. pp. 401–402.
 38. *ibid.*, p. 402.

39. Only the literary quotations: Herloßsohn, K.: *An die Ungarn* and Ernst Ortlepp's poem with a similar title. Also Csapláros, István: *Der Widerhall*. . . 1981, pp. 37–38.
40. Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (Reports from Parliament) vol. II. p. 403. Quoted on the basis of the copy sent to Pál Szemere. *Szemere-tár* (Szemere collection), vol. 13, pp. 83, 345–346.
41. *ibid.* 347.
42. Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (Reports from Parliament) vol. II. pp. 404–410 and Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés*. . . (The Polish question. . .) pp. 165–166.
43. *ibid.* 416–418.
44. Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (Reports from Parliament) vol. II. p. 425.
45. *A lengyel ügyben*. (On the questions of Poland) November 23, 1833. Parliament in session. In: *Szemere-tár* (Szemere collection), vol. 13. pp. 81, 337–340.
46. Kovács, Endre: *A lengyel kérdés*. . . (The Polish question. . .) p. 171.
47. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Levelezése* (Letters) pp. 602–603.
48. *ibid.*
49. Unpublished manuscript signed by Kölcsey, in: Szabolcs-Szatmár County Archives, Nyíregyháza. In: *Megyei Közgyűlési jegyzőkönyv, 1834. február 3, 6. könyv* (Minute book of the County Assembly, February 3, 1834, Book No. 6.). Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Összes művei* (Collected works) /Budapest, 1960/ vol. II. pp. 247–248.
50. Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési tudósítások* (Reports from Parliament) vol. III. /Budapest, 1949/ pp. 492–501.
51. Kölcsey, Ferenc: *Összes művei* (Collected works) /Budapest, 1960/ vol. II. p. 151.
52. The Polish question – by now without Kölcsey – came up twice more in Parliament. First on 2nd April 1835, when it was decided that the Polish problem will be put before the Emperor (Kossuth, Lajos: *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (Reports from Parliament) vol. IV. pp. 314–319.). The second occasion was in March 1836, when Ödön Beöthy, István Bezerédy and Gábor Klauzál representatives protested against the invasion of Cracow by Hungarian soldiers (*ibid.* vol. V. /Budapest, 1961/ pp. 539, 582, 590.) Kölcsey, ex-representative of Szatmár County did not attend these sessions.
53. Szauder, József: *Kölcsey Ferenc* pp. 223–225.