

Ágnes Katalin Varga

Right-wing radical publicism of István Mlotay

**Right-wing radical reeding of three decades of Hungarian history
through the writings István Mlotay**

Theses

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary
Doctoral School of History
Budapest, 2023.

The topic and aim of the research

István Milotay is a characteristic, unavoidable figure of media and political life between the two world wars, one of the leading representatives and opinion leaders of the right-wing press. Initiator, editor and editor-in-chief of several successful right-wing newspapers. His articles and words had a wider field of vision and scope and in many cases his accurate diagnosis were more significant, had a greater influence than the activities and statements from the so-called second or third political factor. As a media leader, his work was more authoritative, with a wider reach as member of the Hungarian Parliamentary or political life, although Milotay was also a member of that.

The importance of the historical elaboration of the topic within the present framework is given by the importance of the formation of the emerging national, nationalist (reform) right-wing, which was formed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The continuity between the neoconservatism of the 19th century and the radical right wing of the Horthy era prevailed through the person of István Milotay. He was an emblematic figure of the modern nationalist aspirations and trend of the reform conservative trend nourished by the roots of national independence. Milotay's way and form of right-wing radicalism has thickened and taken shape in its national newspapers, which have existed for decades, in a specific style and interpretation that answers many questions and problems of the age.

István Milotay permanently let his voice speak from the years of the First World War on, during the occupation of the country, and then through the post-Trianon and Horthy-eras until the end of the Second World War. Initially a proindependence, personal union and reform party, as a national radical advocating for the integrity of borders during the years of occupation. At the beginning of the Horthy era leading Gyula Andrassy's paper as a legitimist, in fact, clearly or less intensively, professing the 'ideals' and 'beliefs' of racial protection throughout. He radicalized under the Gömbös government and then increasingly supported the far-right direction of the government, agreeing with it.

Milotay's representative press reveals another picture of history and political thinking that was silenced after 1945, put on a ban list, or given the most extreme markers. Not many historians have dealt with his person and career. In the 1970s Péter Sipos, Miklós Lackó and István B. Bernát wrote about it retaining the label of right-wing extremism, but in a somewhat more nuanced way, adding reasons, background, and some explanation to the total rejection so far. They themselves acknowledged Milotay's talent, his performance in the right-wing press.

Had been dealing with him from the '90s, or as inevitably, referred to it, quoting from him a sentence or two. Tibor Löffler highlighted the positive, forward-looking side of the popular Milotay, while Krisztián Ungváry negatively emphasized his anti-Semitism. Most recently, János Gyurgyák dealt with him and selected him as a "press worker" as a racist in the volume of the *Magyar fajvédők*. His good pen and his importance are known to many of today's historians. Without claiming completeness: Balázs Ablonczy, Róbert Kerepeszki, Rudolf Paksa, Balázs Sipos, Gábor Ujváry, József Vonyó. His anti-Semitism is still cited by several historians: Péter Bihari, György Litván, Zoltán Paksy, Krisztián Ungváry.

In terms of its aim, the dissertation would like to present a more complete and coherent picture of István Milotay's work, in addition to the existing ones in the literature. Through the excerpt collection of István Milotay's articles would like to present their content, what they have to say and to reveal the connections between the articles' purpose and historical processes. On the other hand to try faithfully reflect a right-wing way of thinking and feeling across the ages, whose parts can be found in the thinking and idealism of the present political right.

The sources and method of the research

The dissertation has interdisciplinary character, with ideological history, political history, and press history. The structure is divided into sixteen chapters. The coordinates of the structure of the dissertation are on the one hand chronological, with the political events of successive periods and the construction of the Milotay press on top of each other, on the other hand thematic, insofar as the content of journalistic, public responses, and editorials on political and other events is problem-oriented. At the same time, the dividing lines of the chapters also well divide the stages of István Milotay's career and work.

The division of topics and chapters are as follows: it begins with the World War I and the articles of the *Új Nemzedék*, the part dealing with the period of the revolutions and the occupation of the country is made up of writings with an increasing, politically radicalizing tone. Milotay and the *Magyarság* during the Bethlen government and on the beginning of the Gömbös government. Right-wing radicalization - Milotay and the *Új Magyarság* under the Gömbös government and the Darányi government. With his far-reaching agreement with Béla Imrédy and his government, he is committed to right-wing social reforms and Jewish laws. Milotay, who supported the country's war under the Teleki- and then the Bárdossy government, and for the Kállay government, which is trying to get the country out of the war - István Milotay belonging to the intellectual circle court of Béla Imrédy's party, becomes the far-right opposition. Milotay, who supported the Sztójay government under the German occupation and Milotay's silencing under the Arrow Cross regime. Finally, the thesis deals with Milotay's two books written in emigration for a short overview, and then a shorter biographical sketch completes the overall picture about him. And the summary tries to articulate the merits of dealing with the topic, the symbolic significance of Milotay's work.

As an information librarian of the NSZL, I was guaranteed the unlimited, unrestricted use of the library material. The work of a librarian provided ideal conditions for in-depth reading and research work. The huge amount of material of the Milotay press itself was the primary source material of the dissertation. The dissertation basically relies on the journalistic work of Milotay. For the weekly and daily newspapers he leads and edits, his speeches in the House of Parliament, a few pieces of his correspondence from the Manuscript Collection of

NSZL, and other archival sources, which are also parts of the dissertation. The relevant parts of the documents of Miklós Kozma of the Hungarian National Archives, and the missing parts of István Antal's diary from the Manuscript Archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences were also included in the dissertation. The court materials of the Budapest Archives, the press lawsuits are included at the level of mentioning, but they do not form the main content of the dissertation.

The printed volumes of Milotay's selected articles were useful due to their collectible character. The works published in Milotay's life mark the writer's success and fertility. In the twenties *Tíz esztendő: cikkek, kortörténeti jegyzetek 1914–1924* (Budapest, 1924) and *A függetlenség árnyékában: cikkek, kortörténeti jegyzetek* (Budapest, 1929). The products of the thirties *Az ismeretlen Magyarország* (Budapest, 1933) and *A szegedi tanyavilágban* (Budapest, 1930). The *Új világ felé: cikkek, kortörténeti jegyzetek 1933-1940* (Budapest, 1940) and *Népi válság, népi Magyarország* (Budapest, 1944) in the forties, while in emigration *Mohácstól Budaörsig: történelmi tanulmány* (Budapest, 2002) and *Egy élet Magyarorszáért: ami Horthy emlékirataiból kimaradt* (Budapest, 2001) later they were also published in book form.

With regard to the most important printed sources related to the period, the dissertation relied primarily on the most important laws on economy and social life, regulations related to territorial changes, and Jewish laws and regulations: *Magyarországi törvények és rendeletek tára*, Pest, 1870–1948; Vértés Róbert (összeáll.) – Székely Gábor (szerk.): *Magyarországi zsidótörvények és rendeletek, 1938-1945*, Budapest, 1997. – *Ezer év törvényei – Hatályos jogszabályok*: <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torvenyei>.

The printed source for party policy was the collection of party programmes: *Magyarországi pártprogramok 1867–1998*, szerk. Gergely Jenő, Budapest, 2003; *Parlamenti viták a Horthy korban*, szerk. Boros Zsuzsanna, Budapest, Rejtjel, 2006.

Observations and results

The dissertation intended to provide a more nuanced and broader touch to Milotay journalism, along major national historical and political events and the reflects on the Milotay articles, the dissertation's narrative is built in this cross section. I also tried to highlight some new aspects, if the system-improving ideas and measures of the reform right had explicitly substantial and perspective, forward-looking aspects as a policy of social state redistribution trying to address market inequalities, attempts to create national integration and a socially cohesive national community. However, in addition to the large economic, social and social differences that exist, the negative discriminatory policies and measures of the Hungarian governments, which consider Hungarian Jewry to be a national minority, can also be included in the list of ethnic and minority rights. With respect to that the dissertation also emphasizes the prevail as a world trend, which were not unique and were found in the government policies of quite a few states.

The crimes committed against Hungarian Jews was took place in the German post-occupation country which meant the execution and fulfillment of the German intention and will, in the management of Hungarian interior ministry officials, and in the implementation of which the law enforcement forces also took part. The purpose and tragic outcome of the deportation of the Jews – in light of the late and not general knowledge of the Auschwitz Protocol – did not fall into the category of clear information to either the initial or the subsequent public nor, according to Milotay's feedback too. The category of labour service was clear, the category of physical destruction was considered “incredible”.

The dissertations considered it important to show parallels and raise awareness – also from previous ‘predictions’ by right-wing political leaders and Milotay – that after the country had become a battleground and then “liberated” by the Soviets, Soviet troops remained in the country what later became apparent for everybody and which was equal with the beginning of another occupation and the development of an opposing, extreme political force, the dictatorship of the Communists. In the following period, thousands were abducted and forced into labour in the country, thousands became victims of physical violence, and thousands more were deported. Social classes were abolished, and the policy of social

“homogenization” has put those belonging to the previous system, thousands of those who took part in it, in a state of existentially impossible or “liquidation”. The vision of Milotay and the anti-Bolshevik right wing about the tragedy in the event of a Soviet victory in the aftermath of what has happened is therefore somewhat understandable and acceptable, that in respect of any liability for genocide, however, with the legitimacy of the principle, with moral and legal judgment procedure we have to agree with them.

Publications related to the topic of the dissertation

István Milotay and the *Új Nemzedék* (1913–1918). In: *Veritas Intézet 2018-as évkönyve*, 111–130.

Right-wing opposition to the Bethlen government. István Milotay and the *Magyarság* (1920–1931). In: *Veritas Intézet 2019-es évkönyve*, 174–197.

Right-wing radicalization, the Győr program and the first Jewish law. István Milotay and the Darányi government. *KRE-Dlt – KRE-Dok online tudományos folyóirata*, 2020/1.

István Milotay following the Imrédy line and the Teleki government. In: *Köztes-Európa társadalomtudományi folyóirat*, 2020/1. 27. szám.

The extreme right of the government in 1941, which can also be marked with István Milotay. The country is at war. In: *Napi Történelmi Forrás online folyóirat*, 2020. 08. 22.

The radical right-wing policy of the Imrédy government. István Milotay and the Imrédy government. In: *A Horthy-korszakról az értékteremtő történetírás jegyében: az újragondolt negyedszázad konferenciasorozat: áttekintés és tanulmányok*, 2021. 179–192.

István Milotay's literary articles. Folk literature – bourgeois literature, the folk – urban contrast. In: *Orpheus Noster*, 2022/1. 86–97.

Government supporter from the opposition: at the head of the New Hungarians. István Milotay and the Gömbös government. Expected appearance: *Veritas Intézet 2022-es évkönyve*.

The German occupation and the “imrédyista” István Milotay. The Szálasi government. Two Milotay books from emigration. Expected appearance: *KRE-Dlt – KRE-Dok online tudományos folyóirata*, 2023.

