

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

Tamás Felicián Sárhegyi

Commemorative Practices of Hungarian Gendarmerie Emigration in Canada

Head of Doctoral School: Dr. Sándor Óze, DsC

Supervisor:
Dr. Kovács Bálint

Pázmány Péter Catholic University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Doctoral School of History
Budapest, 2023

Objectives

The broader topic of the dissertation is a narrower group of Hungarian emigrants in Canada, which is closest to the so-called military emigration in terms of events. However, the thesis argues in its title and use of language that the gendarmarie emigration is a well-defined and interpretable community with individual goals and composition. The research on the history of gendarmaries who emigrated to the west has so far been possible only through texts and life stories that can be considered the self-representation of the community that can be interpreted as a whole. The *Bajtársi Levél*, a press product of the organization analyzed in a separate chapter, and publications written or edited by former members, most of which focus on egodocuments and individual perspectives. However, thanks to the Mikes Kelemen Program, the extensive archival records of the former *Kanadai Magyar Haz* in Toronto, which contains the records of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie Brotherhood Community, which mainly reflects the internal narrative of the organization's operations, as well as written and visual documents related to publications, events and institutions created by the organization, were transferred to Hungary in 2016. However, and with the knowledge of the entire archive, it seemed appropriate to narrow the content of the thesis to a segment of the organization's memory history as memory practices. Accordingly, the history of the operation and formation of the aforementioned organization, the analysis of press publication, the retrospective texts written or edited by former gendarmaries, and the archives of the museum created by the organization were examined during the dissertation. In the course of the study of the topic, I am looking for answers to the following research questions:

- What forms and practices of remembrance have been developed in the Canadian gendarmarie emigration and in connection with it?
- What role do the various former memory policy measures play in the memory practices of the group in the period under review?
- What was the impact of individual and collective memory practices on the formation of the memory narratives?
- How have memory practices changed or evolved over time in the gendarmarie emigration and within it?
- How do memory practices influence identity formation and community ties among individuals involved?
- What are the specific observable reflections of these in the linguistic space?

- What role did artistic and cultural projects play in the memory practices of gendarmarie emigration? What differences and similarities are evident in the memory practices of between generations?
- What role does historical interpretation play in the creation of the memory narratives of the gendarmarie emigration?

The research started from the following hypotheses, the premise of which is the participation in the archival records processing of the aforementioned emigration archive, which made it possible to have a comprehensive knowledge of the written legacy and internal logic of the community under study:

1. In the period under review, the memory practices of the gendarmarie emigration change and evolve, which affects the content and nature of the memory narratives.
2. The memory practices of the gendarmarie emigration are transformed and influenced by the memory narratives under the influence of the individual time of the members of the remembering community, the cognitive changes that occur during aging, and the transformation of the layers of memory. The members of the former active gendarmarie corps are constantly transforming their relationship to the most important points of collective memory throughout their lives and over the decades. As a result, the emphasis changes over the decades, which is not independent of the different memory policy goals, which include the possibility of rehabilitating and re-establishing.
3. The memory narratives of the gendarmarie emigration are formed and transformed under the influence of the interactions between individual and collective memory practices. The patterns of individual experiences and life stories give the unity of the memory of the gendarmarie emigration, but with its individual differences, the individual is placed in a larger story that is not independent of the history of the Hungarian nation, emigration, the Cold War, or Canada.
4. Memory practices influence identity formation and community ties among individuals involved in gendarmarie emigration. In addition, they also influence the way these identities and ties are passed down. The memory practice is strengthened and transformed with the help of various public, professional, and cultural projects. These include the *Bajtársi Levél*, a press publication of the organization, texts published by the members of the organization, memoirs, and institutions, such as the former Gendarmarie Museum.

Methodology

The doctoral dissertation methodologically fits into the circle of traditional historical research, since it largely placed the toolkit of qualitative content analysis in the foreground in the interpretation of the extracted data and texts. The layers of understanding and interpretation also include contemporary history as a temporal context, which also frames the research possibilities of the Canadian Hungarian gendarmerie emigration as a set of linguistic and ideological processes. The theoretical approaches, on the other hand, largely influence the applicable methodology. Accordingly, it is important to highlight collective memory, the various diaspora and museum theories, which, as branches of social and cultural theory, defined and framed the entire dissertation, implicitly embedded in the analytical text sections.

The dissertation uses qualitative content analysis to interpret data and texts from a variety of sources, including the *Bajtársi Levél*, a magazine published by the Hungarian gendarmerie emigration in Canada. The dissertation also uses quantitative methods to analyze the language of the *Bajtársi Levél*. The author does not make a clear distinction between primary and secondary sources, as he considers the collection of archival records to be a memory construction.

Results

The Hungarian gendarmerie emigration, a group of former Hungarian gendarmerie officers who fled the country after World War II, had a complex and evolving identity. In the early years of the emigration, the group was focused on returning to Hungary. However, as the Cold War began, they came to terms with the reality that they would be living in exile for the foreseeable future. During this time, the gendarmerie emigration began to develop a strong sense of identity as a community. They published a magazine, the *Bajtársi Levél*, which helped to promote their shared values and experiences. In the 1960s, the magazine and editorial board moved to Canada. This was a time of great growth for the group, as they established new communities and organizations.

A key figure in this period was Kövendy Szathmáry Károly, who founded the Museum in Canada. The museum collected artifacts and documents from the gendarmerie and other Hungarian military forces. The gendarmerie emigration continued to thrive in Canada until the 1980s. However, as the members of the group aged and passed away, their numbers began to decline. The last members of the gendarmerie emigration lived to see the fall of communism and the rehabilitation of the gendarmerie. However, they were unable to achieve their goal of

reorganizing the gendarmerie or regaining its social and moral standing.

The gendarmerie emigration's identity was shaped by a number of factors, including:

- Their shared history and experiences as gendarmerie officers
- The political and historical context of the Cold War
- Their geographic location in exile

The gendarmerie emigration's memory practices were also shaped by these factors.

In the early years of the emigration, the group focused on the possibility of returning to Hungary. However, as they came to terms with the reality of exile, they began to focus on preserving their heritage and identity. The gendarmerie emigration's memory practices were also shaped by the Holocaust. The gendarmerie was involved in the deportation of Jews during the war. This involvement has been a source of controversy for the gendarmerie emigration, and it has shaped the way they remember their history. The gendarmerie emigration's story is a complex and nuanced one. It is a story of exile, identity, and memory.

Related Publications

- Sárhegyi Tamás: *A kiállított múlt: A Magyar Királyi Fegyveres Erők Múzeuma Torontóban*. Valóság (2023) 1. sz. 17 p.
- Sárhegyi Tamás: *Aszimmetrikus ellenfogalmak történeti-politikai elemzése a 20. századi kanadai magyar emigrációs sajtóban*. In: XXIV. Tavaszi Szél Konferencia 2021 Tanulmánykötet II. Szerkesztette: Molnár Dániel és Molnár Dóra. 636–648. 13. p.
- Sárhegyi Tamás: *1956 emlékezete Kanadában: A forradalommal összefüggő iratanyag a Torontói Magyar Ház archívumában* TURUL 2017: 2 pp. 85–89. 5 p. (2018)
- Sárhegyi Tamás: *Nándor Dreisziger: Church and Society in Hungary and in the Hungarian Diaspora* TURUL 2017: 2 pp. 110–110. 1 p. (2018)
- Bakó Zsigmond, Szabó Dorottya, Sárhegyi Tamás: *Emberi sorsok a kanadai magyar emigrációban*: Lendvay-Zwickl Jenő életútja ARCHIVNET 17: 3 p. (2017)