

ÉFSZ SUN

FREEDOM FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY

The revolution and war of independence 1848-49



Precedents of Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49

The programme of 1848-49 was preceded by some preparatory work lasting nearly 20 years. Although, they were able to achieve only few real changes, it was possible for the reformist, liberal nobility to prepare their own program. The new leaders of the future revolution appeared in public: Lajos Batthyány, Lajos Kossuth, Ferenc Deák, István Széchenyi, Bertalan Szemere, József Eötvös and others. In November 1847 when the feudal parliament ressembled, two political parties (the reformist Opposition Circle and the Conservative Party) had an accurate programme. The Conservative Party was supported by the Imperial Court of Vienna. Negotiations reached a stalemate in winter when the news of the revolution in Paris changed the situation. Lajos Kossuth made a speech on 3rd March in which he put the programme and claims of the opposition into words: emancipation of serfs, equality of sacrifice, representative parliament and responsible government.



15 March 1848: The Revolution in Budapest

On hearing the oncoming revolution of Vienna, the March youths decided to take immediate steps in Pest. In the morning of 15 March after proclaiming the Twelve Claims on the street and reciting the 'National Song' by Petőfi a demonstration began. The first deliberate and ceremonial act of the revolution was the seizure of the well-known printing press called Landerer in the city centre. The documents of the revolution were printed and handed out. The growing crowd went in front of the Town Hall and made those in charge of the town accept the Twelve Claims.

The committee was charged to demand the council of governor-general over the country in Buda to permit the organization of the national guard and the release of the political prisoners.



To lay more emphasis on their demands, the whole crowd moved to the castle over the boat-bridge and released Tancsics from the jail in Buda and accompanied him to Pest. The afternoon of this great day was ended with a rally after the series of demonstrations. The revolution in Pest won without bloodshed. The news of the events were spread by the freed press like a shot in the whole country. The revolution in Pest was followed by the one in the country in a few days.

The Batthyány government and the April laws



On 15 March 1848 the delegation of the national assembly of Bratislava carried on negotiations with the Hapsburg monarch in Vienna. Being under the pressure of the circumstances.

Ferdinand V. sanctioned the petition passed in the Parliament on the previous day. Parallel with this, the revolution broke out led by the radical youths in Pest, which enforced the twelve claims bloodless. The events in Pest – in the reflection of the happenings in Vienna – became legitimized.

On 23 March in the upper house of the Parliament Lajos Batthyány, appointed prime minister on 17 March, declared the list of names of his ministry.

According to it:

- Lajos Batthyány – prime minister
- Bertalan Szemere – interior minister
- Lajos Kossuth – finance minister
- Ferenc Deák – minister of justice
- Lázár Mészáros – minister of national defence
- Gábor Klauzál – minister of agriculture, industry and commerce

István Széchenyi – minister of public works and transport

József Eötvös – minister of religion and education

Pál Esterházy – minister a latere

The April laws having been passed by the last feudal national assembly was sanctioned by Ferdinand V. on 11 April.

The most important parts of the April laws:

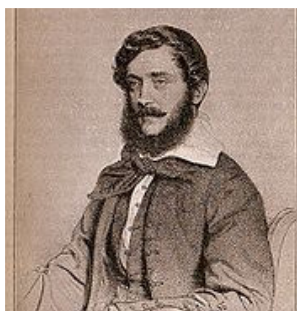
- independent Hungarian government
- repeal of burden relating to socage and ecclesiastical tithes
- immediate and compulsory fee simple with state compensation
- suffrage according to low rating
- cease of censorship, publicity
- general and proportionate sharing of taxation
- freedom of the press

This meant a turning-point in the Hungarian history, the economic, political and governing system went through an enormous change. By virtue of the April laws Hungary became almost independent. Hungary and Transylvania was united. The laws provided the development of the bourgeois and the possibility to join up Western Europe. The elimination of the feudal system based on serfdom and privileges of nobility started. The emancipation of serfs was also set but its exact way was not arranged for the time being.

What's your opinion of the dethronement of the Hapsburgs?



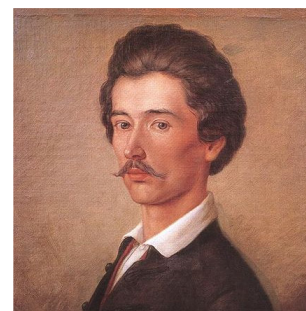
Klemens Wenzel Lothar von Metternich: It is scandalous and ridiculous. Who do these rebellious Hungarians think they are? It is unbelievable, that some Hungarian 'gentlemen' have the face to rebel against and dethrone the legitimate monarch ruling at the mercy of God. We have to overcome these events and defeat this rebellion before it starts more upheavals all over Europe. Hurrah for the emperor!



Lajos Kossuth: The monarch went back on his words so the Hungarian nation acted by right when they dethroned the Hapsburgs. I believe that the Hungarian mettle can be felt in a more useful way in the scope of the republic. The time has come. Hurrah for the republic!



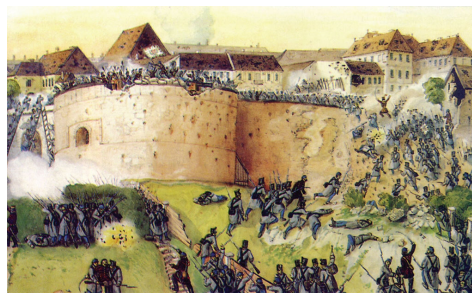
István Széchenyi: I am very sorry that things have reached this point. I am afraid, we will lose Europe's sympathy if the revolution gets radical. Also, we will lose our strength and belief in the legitimate fight. As I see it, if we had stayed in the monarchy, we could have got on with building modern and strong Hungary. Hurrah for Hungary!



Sándor Petőfi: At long last the events turned out as people had wished. It serves the Hapsburgs right as they exploit the Hungarian nation and live as a parasite on Hungarian society. I hope that all the nations of Europe will chase away their tormentor. Hurrah for the nation!

Military History of the Great Hungarian War of Independence (1848-'49)

After the Hapsburgs suppressed the Italian revolution they turned against the new Hungarian government. The Hapsburg ruler, Ferdinand V. revoked the fresh Constitution that he had just sanctioned on 15th March, 1848. But Batthyány's government had been ready to defend the Constitution. So recruitment had started and a National Defence Committee was founded by Kossuth Lajos.



The War of Independence started with Jellasics's offensive campaign against Hungary's new government in the beginning of September, 1848. But the inexperienced Hungarian Army repulsed the attack by the end of the same month. After that a revolution broke out in Vienna again. The Hungarian government wanted to support Vienna's revolutionary people but the Hapsburg forces stopped the Hungarian Army at Schwechat near the Austrian capital. So it had to retreat to Hungary.

In December of 1848 the 18 years old Francis Joseph became the new emperor of Austria. He sent General Windischgrätz with powerful forces (44.000) against the revolutionary Hungary. Therefore the Hungarian government had to move to Debrecen. (It is a town in Eastern Hungary.) The Hapsburgs occupied a very large proportion of Hungary in this winter-campaign. They took over the Northern and Western part of the country as well as Transylvania and Croatia, too.

But in the victorious spring-campaign of 1849 the Hungarian Army started a counter-attack. General Bem and Görgey had driven out the Hapsburg troops from all Transylvania and Hungary with the exception of a few Western counties. On 14th April, 1849 Kossuth dethroned the Hapsburg dynasty from Hungary and issued the Declaration of Independence.

After that Francis Joseph asked some support from Russia. In the name of the Holy Alliance Tzar Nicholas the first was ready to help the Austrian emperor. So a huge Russian Army (with 200.000 men) came to Hungary. It was bigger and more numerous than it had ever been before in Europe. (Including the Napoleonic Wars, too.) The revolutionary Hungarian Army (170.000) was outnumbered by his enemy (360.000) so it had to yield to the superior



forces and finally General Görgey laid down arms before the Russians at Világos on 13th August, 1849.

After all, the Hapsburgs punished the rebellious Hungary. 13 revolutionary Generals and the first Hungarian prime minister were executed. Kossuth Lajos and hundreds were sent into exile. Széchenyi István was closed to a mental hospital until his death. And Hungary was deprived of her rights within the Hapsburg Empire.

Judgement of Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49



The 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence was a significant event of the modern history of Hungary as it is one of the bases of our national identity. It started the formation of modern civilized society with its reforms and became a part of our national mythology. It was an integral part of the European revolutions in 1848, however, the only one with successful military resistance. Its success is shown by the fact that they could defeat it only with the intervention of the Tsarist Russia.

What do you think would have happened if the War of Independence (1848) hadn't been put down?



Andrea Jurik 12.e

First of all, I think the life of the Hungarian people would be better now. Hungary would have been independent with its own decisions. The emancipation of serfs would have started earlier and perhaps our economy would also be in a better condition now.

However it is, it would have been advantageous for the country.



Viktória Kovács 11.e

If the War of Independence hadn't been put down, the rule of Haynau wouldn't have come into existence, the 13 martyrs of Arad wouldn't have been executed, Transylvania and Croatia wouldn't have been separated, the bondage mightn't have been emancipated.

What do you think would have happened if the War of Independence (1848) hadn't been put down?



András Tóth 11.e

In my opinion, if the War of Independence hadn't been put down we might not have been drifted into the first World War. After we had defeated, the country suffered an unproportional repartition. If we hadn't been given such a big punishment we wouldn't have got into the second World War.

So I believe if we had won the War of Independence, we could have lived a happy life in our big land.

However, we lost that so we have only a little penniless Hungary and a lot of amateur politicians who are not able to administer the country.



Bertalan Szabó
12.f

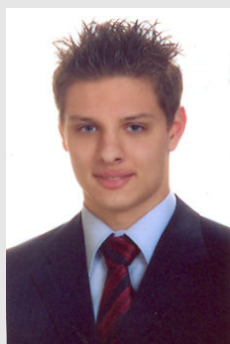


Roland Dóka
12.f

Our history could be formed in many other ways. If the War of Independence hadn't been put down, the big, historical Hungary may have been kept because of the first law of nationalities.

As a result of this, Hungary mightn't have entered the first World War. Before the first World War we had quite a prospering and developing state but the war had serious consequences for the country and big territories were taken away.

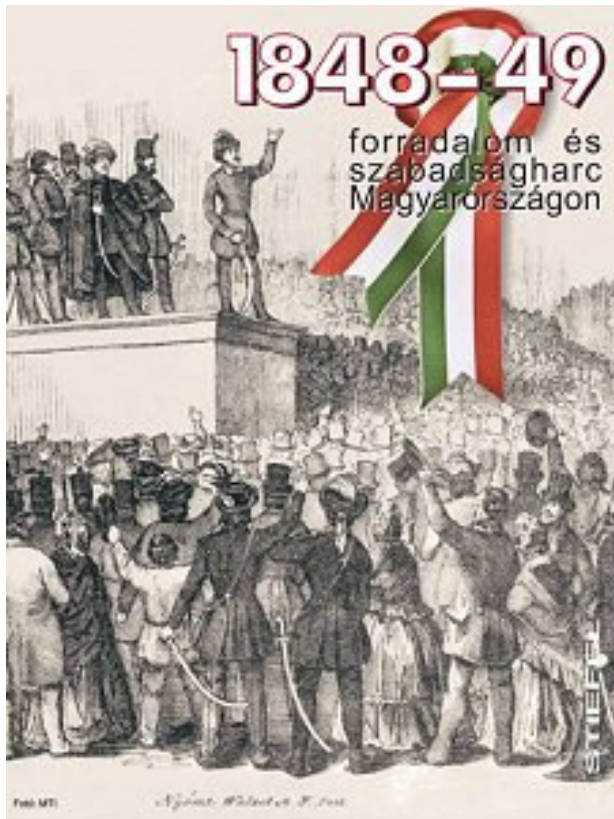
Anyway, if the War of Independence had been successful, we would probably have more freedom, possibilities and authority in politics to make better decisions in hot situations.



András Tóth 12.f

In my opinion, if we wouldn't have laid down arms at Világos, Görgei's full powers must have remained but the lead would have been taken over quickly by the Hapsburgs over the country. The invading Russian and Austrian teams would have destroyed the rest of the resistant Hungarian armies. Presumably, the whole Hungary would have been melted into the Hapsburg empire the way Bach prepared it, but he didn't succeed. Hungary became part of the Hapsburg empire. There was no escape. The Germanisation, the soldiers' execution or imprisonment would have begun in the country. Destroying nationalities living in Hungary might have started as well but fortunately it didn't happen. After all, we can say that Hungary would never have been able to create its today's independent state if it hadn't laid down arms at Világos there.

A comparison between the Great Hungarian War of Independence (1848-'49) and the Uprising of 1956



Although the Hungarian history has plenty of uprisings and freedom fightings now I examine only 1848-'49 and 1956. Because these two events were supported by the whole Hungarian nation whereas the others divided that.

Analogies:

- Both events broke out against an oppressive system and regime.
- Both of them were supported by the whole nation.
- They had an early successful stages and later they had to fall against the superior forces.
- They created great international response.
- They were suppressed by Russian troops.
- After their suppress both of them were followed by punishments.

Differences:

- While the Great War of Independence (1848-'49) fought against the Hapsburg absolutism and its troops, the Uprising of 1956 had to struggle against the Soviet dictatorship and the Red Army.
- In 1848-'49 the revolutionary Hungarian Army was equal with his Hapsburg opponents forces and could fight successfully against them. In 1956 the Hungarians had no chance against the Red Army.
- Their international circumstances were very different.
- Their punishments were also very different in numbers. The communists killed ten times more people than the Hapsburgs. While hundreds had to emigrate under the Hapsburgs, the communist regime chased more than 200.000 people to West.



