

Sándor Kisfaludy: *Hazafüi Szózat a' Magyar Nemességhéz* (1809) [Patriotic appeal to the Hungarian nobility]. Source publication, edited by Ágoston Nagy. Budapest: Reciti, 2022. 416 pp.

The twelfth volume of the prestigious *ReTextum* series published by the Reciti Press of the Institute for Literary Studies at the Research Centre for Humanities consists of the first critical edition of Sándor Kisfaludy's *Hazafüi Szózat a' Magyar Nemességhéz* (Patriotic appeal to the Hungarian nobility, 1809), edited by Ágoston Nagy, research fellow at the József Eötvös Research Centre's Tamás Molnár Research Institute at the University of Public Service in Budapest. The publication of this volume commemorates the 250th anniversary of the birth of famous Hungarian poet and officer of the noble levy (meaning conscription and also referred to as *insurrectio*) Sándor Kisfaludy, who wrote this work on behalf of Archduke Joseph of Habsburg-Lothringen, the Palatine of Hungary, as a semi-official propaganda text on the occasion of the 1809 Hungarian noble levy against Napoleon's invading forces.

Kisfaludy's pamphlet is regarded as the most notable example of anti-Napoleon war propaganda in Hungary, and it is an important historical source of contemporary noble discourse related to the concepts of patriotism and nationhood at a time when the modern concept of the nation was beginning to emerge in East Central Europe. The current source edition by Ágoston Nagy makes all existing textual versions of Kisfaludy's work available to a broader public for the first time, as it contains not only the Hungarian autograph draft and fair copy but also the German excerpt of the work, the latter two with the remarks and deletions of Archduke Joseph, who censored Kisfaludy's work himself, and a German-language translation by his contemporary, the famous scholar and professor of aesthetics, Johann Ludwig von Schedius. The critical edition consists not only of a meticulous textological apparatus, but also ample factual notes, a lengthy and detailed introductory study (which takes up the entire first half of the book), and a short German-language overview.

According to Nagy, the broader context of Kisfaludy's semi-official propaganda work needs to be interpreted within the framework of the French revolutionary wars that began in 1792, with particular attention to the three previous Hungarian noble levies of 1797, 1800, and 1805, as well as the governmental reforms of the Habsburg Court, which were intended to ensure a successful military campaign against Napoleon. In the introductory part, Nagy

examines the military, political, and juridical background of the mobilization of the military campaign by the noblemen for the war of 1809, with a special focus on the leadership roles of Archduke Palatine Joseph and his chief aide-de-camp, Count Joseph Beckers zu Wetterstetten.

After the catastrophic defeat in the War of the Third Coalition in 1805, the Austrian Empire showed “great resilience” as it began to mobilize a broader stratum of society, especially the middle classes “left previously exempt from military service” in the spirit of the new concept of a people’s or national war (or “Volks-/Nationalkrieg”) (p.13). This aim was served by an innovative, far-reaching, and complex field of institutionalized official and semi-official propaganda. The key figures in this propaganda campaign were Minister of Foreign Affairs Count Johann Philipp Stadion and Archduke John, who played a crucial role in setting up a new military force for territorial defense (*Landwehr*) in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire. Archduke John maintained good relations with famous patriotic intellectuals, such as Friedrich von Gentz, Johannes von Müller, and Baron Josef von Hormayr, who played a key role in the propaganda activity, which was organized in order to appeal to a heterogeneous array of groups (pp.14–15).

As Nagy emphasizes, the Kingdom of Hungary presents a “unique case” within the Habsburg Empire, not only because of its “constitutional autonomy, the traditional military structure of its estates, and its strong constitutionalist political culture,” but also from the perspective of the relationship between war and nation and the practices of mobilization and propaganda activity. During the Napoleonic Wars, the estates in Hungary exercised significant influence on the military affairs of their country at the diets convoked by the ruler (p.21). The nobility, which enjoyed a privileged legal status, made up a significant percentage of Hungarian society, and in terms of property and wealth, it was a very diverse group, ranging from wealthy aristocrats to petty noblemen who lived more or less like peasants. As a “body politic, it would have been impossible to mobilize the masses of this stratum to fulfill their constitutional duty of defense (the *insurrectio*), or to increase their free offer for military purposes (military aid) without the use of propaganda.” Otherwise, within a political and social framework dominated by the self-confident, influential, and wealthy county-nobility (the *bene possessionati*), it would not have been possible to implement the necessary institutional reforms required by the concept of the whole empire’s “national war” (p.22).

It would not have been an effective solution simply to translate or imitate the centralized imperial propaganda, either. As Nagy puts it, “instead, regarding both the renewal of military institutions and the ideology of the official propaganda that supported it, we can speak of a ‘productive reception’ tailored to the specificities of the country as a specific cultural transfer process—led by Palatine Joseph, who knew the expectations of both the Court and the Hungarian estates very well and tried to balance between the two—and indirectly fitted into larger-scale French–Austrian, French–German cultural exchange processes” (p.22).

Archduke Joseph realized that it was necessary to adapt, given the changed nature of wars, and he elaborated a detailed military reform plan that was discussed at the diet of 1808, resulting in Articles 2 and 3 of the Laws of 1808, which regulated the legal framework of the noble levy (pp.23–24). The *insurrectio* of 1809, which was set up according to this legal framework, can be considered unique from many angles. According to Nagy, it can be viewed as a “socially exclusive, selectively compulsory institution of defense that can be characterized as a temporary national militia” that obliged apt male members of the noble Hungarian nation (*natio* or *gens Hungarica*) to perform personal military service for the cause of defense (pp.24–25).

The official and semi-official propaganda activity for the mass mobilization for this institution of estates managed to implement the concept of “national war” in “relation to communities of estates and their members with a certain constellation of rights and duties” (p.25). The Napoleonic Wars “opened up the world” for Hungarian society, which was to some extent on the periphery of Western European social development, and this was accompanied by a “boom in information” and a rapid increase of literary production, which resulted in a broad exchange of ideas among nobles of all counties of the kingdom (pp.25–26). A significant amount of propaganda consisted of unofficial encouraging texts of various genres. Most of these were originally written in Hungarian, but because of the multilingual nature of the country, the traditional official language of Latin was also used, as well as the German language of the imperial administration (pp.26–27).

The Hungarian system adopted the Austrian mechanism, which employed “professional” literates for the production of targeted propaganda for the population of operational areas of military units. “From the circles of the Palatine, two writers, Sándor Kisfaludy and Ferenc Verseghy, stand out” (p.27). Kisfaludy took part in the production of war propaganda first from the civilian and then from the military side, and Verseghy, a former Pauline monk (who had

suffered almost decade-long imprisonment for his involvement in the Hungarian Jacobin Movement led by Ignác Martinovics and then had served as the Hungarian language teacher of Archduke Joseph after his release), took part in the propaganda production from the civil side (p.27). “Referral newspapers were an important medium for the distribution of official propaganda materials” as well (p.31). The most prominent of these were the German-language *Preßburger Zeitung* and *Vereinigte Ofner und Pester Zeitung* and the Hungarian-language *Magyar Kurir* (Vienna) and *Hazai és Külföldi Tudósítások* (Pest). These journals usually reported news of war and foreign policy without comment, but they also published reports sent in by readers from various parts of the country. They constituted an important node in the flow of information on the course of the war and proved an important and effective tool of war propaganda through the publication of official, semi-official, and unofficial propaganda materials (pp.32–33).

The introductory part of the volume discusses Kisfaludy’s other works related to the noble levy and the war of 1809. This overview by Nagy outlines a proposal for a series of source publications which ideally, by following the principle of the current edition of *Hazaírú Szózat*, would see this entire group of texts published in a similar format, though without Kisfaludy’s works of fiction inspired by the decisive experiences of the mobilization of the *insurrectio* (p.33). Kisfaludy was given the task of writing an answer to Napoleon’s proclamation to the Hungarian nobility, but he did not finish this answer, since in the end it was not needed, as the county authorities managed to prevent the spread of French propaganda prints. Kisfaludy also composed a report for the ruler on the *insurrectio*. Beginning in October 1809, Kisfaludy wrote and translated other texts as well which “are not only important sources about the noble levy but also represent a distinctly noble-national narrative of the events, which reflects, in spite of its official character, the peculiarities of Kisfaludy’s writing style and his approach to politics and history” (p.39).

The detailed introductory part continues with a “biographical sketch” of Kisfaludy’s activities in the service of Zala County and Palatine Joseph, examining the circumstances of the request by Beckers and the composition of the *Patriotic Appeal*. According to Nagy, several factors played a role in the palatine’s decision to choose Kisfaludy for the role of aid-de-camp entrusted with propaganda tasks. The most important among these were most likely his practical and theoretical military experience, his knowledge of French, his

high education, his good network of contacts, and his popularity as a writer of Hungarian poems (pp.66–68).

After examining the contexts of the genesis of the *Patriotic Appeal*, Nagy gives a thorough reconstruction of its publication history (pp.68–73) and the intentions of the client and author, who presented the approaching war as an existential threat to the noble Hungarian nation and wanted to raise awareness of the alleged need of a “moral regeneration of his political community” through “the revival of heroic virtues and the setting up of an *insurrectio*” (p.77). Nagy also gives detailed information concerning the available manuscripts of Kisfaludy’s pamphlet and its German extract. He outlines the characteristics of Palatine Joseph’s censorship of the original fair copy of the pamphlet, gives a short overview of the draft of the corrections, and reviews the questions related to the German translation by Schedius, of which no manuscript version has survived (pp.77–96). The critical edition presents an extremely thorough historical, contextual, sociological, and textological interpretation of the textual corpus related to Kisfaludy’s work. Nagy uses the interpretative framework of literary studies in the analysis of the para-, peri-, and intertextual dimensions of this historical text, and he gives a detailed overview of its structure and content (pp.96–111). This thorough and wide scholarly analysis is complemented with an examination of the sources and viewpoints of the historical parts of Kisfaludy’s work (pp.111–33), the history of its original publication, its contemporary reception (pp.133–80), and an overview of the textological problems and principles of the textual edition (pp.181–91). The introductory part of the volume ends with a brief German-language summary (pp.192–97).

The second half of the book (pp.199–416) contains the aforementioned textual versions of Kisfaludy’s *Patriotic Appeal* with a detailed but, given its complexity, not necessarily reader-friendly critical apparatus. It also contains a list of archival sources and a bibliography at the end.

In sum, the critical source edition of this important historical textual corpus is without doubt a remarkable interdisciplinary scholarly achievement. Ágoston Nagy has made a significant contribution to a deeper and more complex understanding of the history of ideas and political, cultural, and mental processes at work in early nineteenth-century Hungary and Central Europe.

Kálmán Tóth
University of Public Service
Toth.Kalman@uni-nke.hu