

# Appointments to the episcopal see in Munkács 1650–1690

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One of the three main conditions for „the union at Ungvár” was „to have a bishop elected by ourselves (that is by the clergy of the diocese of Munkács) and confirmed by the Apostolic See”.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the ecclesiastical identity in those conditions was not self-evidently secured without a native bishop who enjoyed a wide confidence. Thus, let us see the fulfilment of this claim in the first period of the union.

## 1. „*Habent sua fata libelli*” – The fate of the „Union’s Decree”

The very incriminated document „*libellus unionis*”, called „*Decree of Union at Ungvár*” by Church historians, was dated on 15 January 1652. It reports about the way and the conditions on which 63 Ruthenian priests united themselves with the Catholic Church on 24 April 1646 at Ungvár. Several problems were raised concerning the document. Firstly, there are more than one existing versions, but its original text, presumably Slavonic, has not yet come to light. The letter in 1652 was written by the Ruthenian priests to Pope Innocent X in order to obtain his confirmation to the election of Parthenius. Some scholars have presumed that the original – having been not found in the archives of the Propaganda – has to be at the Holy Office.<sup>2</sup> According to the actual state of researches it is not there, so we have no hope to bring it out of the archives, which were closed until recently. (It does not seem to be got lost somewhere, because it is mentioned nowhere in the documents of the Holy Office concerning Munkács.) It is quite sure that the letter addressed to the Pope has never arrived to the Roman Pontiff. One of the reasons for this could be the list of conditions (e.g. free election of the bishop), which could be suitable for the requirements accepted on the Council of Florence, but being in hard opposition to the Catholic view after the Tridentinum and to the tone of request of the letter.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> „...*episcopum a nobis electum et ab Apostolica Sede confirmatum habere*”. A. HODINKA, *A munkácsi gör. szert. püspökség okmánytára. I. 1458–1715*, Ungvár 1911 (= *Okmánytár*), no. 122, 163–165.

<sup>2</sup> M. LACKO S.J., *The Union of Užhorod*, Second printing. Slovak Institute, Cleveland – Rome 1976, 132.

<sup>3</sup> Further analyse vide I. BAÁN, ‘La pénétration de l’unionisme en Ukraine subcarpathique au XVII<sup>e</sup>

The letter of the „*Ruthenian people*” written about a half year later, and read on 18 November 1652 at the Holy Office submitted the petition in a more gentle form specifying the circumstances, so we suppose to have the adaptation of the letter written earlier but without recalling the events at Ungvár. Therefore – as it was already suspected by Lacko, too – „*the document of union*” has never reached Rome, and it was never presented to and consequently it was never accepted by the supreme authority. On the contrary, the memorandum of the „*Ruthenian people*” was read at the Sant’ Ufficio as one submitted by „*the Latin rite clergy and people united to the Apostolic See, abiding in the dioceses of Esztergom and Eger*”!<sup>4</sup> (However, it might have been recorded only due to a fault of hearing by the notary, because we can not find it later.) In any case, it reflects the view of regulating the question in the scope of the Latin Church system. Eger had had from the outset this standpoint and kept it, and only the energetic self-assurance of the Primate acting for his own rights tried to stop it.

„*Habent sua fata libelli.*” The question does emerge whether the very content and aim of this document were neglected or contested by the Catholic side?

## 2. Ways of procedure for an appointment

Before the union there was only one way of procedure in the case of an appointment to the Munkács’ see: an election from the brethren of the monastery at Munkács or an import of a candidate from abroad (like Basil Taraszovics), then confirmation by the prince of Transylvania as protector, and finally ordination by bishops inside or outside Hungary or Transylvania (that is in Moldavia or Galicia). Therefore, this procedure was followed in the case of Joannicius Zejkan. Hence, those who subscribed the union decree naively thought that hereafter the prince of Transylvania would be substituted by the Roman Pontiff. However, there were some more possible ways to appoint a Catholic bishop to Munkács:

- a candidate elected by the local clergy, confirmed by the Pope, nominated by the Apostolic King and ordained by Catholic (uniate) bishops; or
  - a candidate elected by the local clergy, ordained by Orthodox bishops, dispensed and confirmed by the Pope, and nominated by the Apostolic King (like Parthenius); or
  - a candidate nominated by the Prince of Transylvania, ordained by Orthodox bishops and made a Catholic profession of faith (like Methodius Rakoveczky);
- or

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siècle’, in *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, no 220, 55<sup>e</sup> année, no 3/2003, 515–526.

<sup>4</sup> FSO, St.St.Decreta a. 1652, f. 174v: „*Lecto etiam memoriali Cleri et populi ritus latini uniti Sedi Apostolicae dioecesium Strigoniensis et Agriensis.*”

- a candidate from abroad, confirmed by the Pope, ordained by Catholic (uniate) bishops and nominated by the Apostolic King (like De Camillis); or
- a candidate nominated by the Prince of Transylvania, ordained by Orthodox bishops, dispensed and confirmed by the Pope (like Joseph Volosinovskiy); or
- a Uniate bishop from abroad, nominated by the Princ(ess) of Transylvania (like John Malachowski, bishop of Przemysl);
- a Uniate bishop from abroad, nominated by the Primate for an administrator (like the Greek metropolitans Theophanes Maurocordatos and Raphael of Ancyra).

However, the first one of these seven ways, i.e. the normal procedure required by the Catholic canon law and the request of the libellus unionis, was actually never followed in the diocese of Munkács in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. A complicated procedure for Parthenius

The first uniate bishop, Parthenius was elected between 23 July and 5 August 1651 by the clergy of the diocese of Munkács to succeed the late Basil Tarasovics (1638–1651) in the Episcopal See. Parthenius, a Basilian monk who had taken an active part in the promotion of the Church union, was nominated to the Visitor of the Ruthenians in Hungary by the Primate György Lippay, Archbishop of Esztergom, in order to prevent the installation of his Orthodox counter-candidate, Johannicius Zejkán of Munkács (1651–1686), supported by the Calvinist Prince of Transylvania, György (George) Rákóczi II (1648–1660).<sup>5</sup> In the possession of this document, Orthodox Archbishop Stephen Simonovics ordained Parthenius to bishopric at Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia, Rumania) on 8 September 1651,<sup>6</sup> and two days later, on 10 September the Primate has requested the Pope to dispense his protégé from the irregularity.<sup>7</sup> It is too complicated and boring to tell the odyssey of the well known Parthenius' case, stormtossed between Scylla and Charybdis of various high opinions of the canon law and ecclesiastical policy.<sup>8</sup> However, numerous questions to be answered have emerged.

1. Why was the case referred to the Holy Office? If the case had been only an erection of a new bishopric that would have been referred to the Consistorial Congregation; however, the ordination of Parthenius was overloaded with a dispensation, therefore it belonged to the competence of the Sant'Ufficio. It

<sup>5</sup> *Okmánytár*, no. 118; 159–160.

<sup>6</sup> *Okmánytár*, no. 117; 158–159.

<sup>7</sup> APF, SOCG 218 (Ungaria et Bosnia I), 242rv (prius 128rv, 237rv), 243r (*Okmánytár*, no. 119)

<sup>8</sup> BAÁN I., 'The Dispensation's Process of Parthenius, Greek Rite Bishop of Munkács', in PLATANIA, G., SANFILIPPO, M., TUSOR, P. (a cura di), *Gli archivi della Santa Sede e il Regno d'Ungheria (secc. 15–20). In memoriam di Lajos Pásztor*. (Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae) vol. 4. Budapest – Roma 2008, 113–132.

seems that even Pope Innocent X transferred the case only by way of precaution, and from that time onward the Propaganda did not dare to move but it was waiting.

2. Who did impress the referring to the Holy Office? The case was reported in October 1651 by Cardinal Trivulzio, because it was still handed as a “Ruthenian” one, but in December and in March by Cardinal Pamphili as the protector of the Hungarian cases, among others. The secretary of the Holy Congregation of Supreme Office, Cardinal Francesco Barberini seems to have kept his hands on the case, probably he wanted to decide in his competence, and therefore he made the case referred to himself. He was corresponding with the Nuncios, and if he had wanted to urge to finish the case sooner, nobody could have hindered him in it.

3. What was the coming to a standstill due to? From November 1652 the process was slowed down by acquiring and controlling the information. However, I am of the opinion that this is only apparently right, for at the decision in 1655 the Cardinals returned to the original starting point, having put aside the information acquired until then. Actually, the relations between the competent persons involved in the affair could specify its pace. Probably the matter was not about the Ruthenians and Munkács, but about the ambitions for cardinality of György Lippay and the views on this matter in Rome.<sup>9</sup> It turned out on 19 February 1652 that the name of the Primate was not mentioned on the consistory, which was aiming to create new cardinals, thus Parthenius’ affair could be referred in easier way on 5 March to the Holy Office, where it became in some way „laid”.

The Archbishop of Esztergom developed in his memorial letter addressed to the Pope in March the arguments, which could favour his own nomination to the Cardinal post: one of them was the union of 300 000 Orthodox to the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> With the continually weakening chances of Lippay, the decision of Parthenius’ case was delaying. The Nuncio gave no help for urging, and although we have no written evidence for his deliberate opposition to the dispensation of the bishop of Munkács, but we can suspect that he tried to identify himself by his cautious and even scruple behaviour with the delaying policy of Francesco Barberini. Perhaps even due to this, the Primate was waiting until the next consistory: but on 2 March 1654 he had to be disappointed again. He presented his ample report afterwards, and his act was probably helped by the letter of Barberini dated on 13 June in which he assured Lippay generally of his support „in the cases concerning the Archbishop’s person”.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the Primate - seeing lost his Cardinal ambitions - was offended also by the fact that the Archbishop of Pisa, Scipione Pannochieschi d’Elci Nuncio of Vienna was trying to prevail over him in a case concerning his own church province, although the Archbishop of

<sup>9</sup> Cf. P. TUSOR, *Purpura Pannonica. Az esztergomi „bíborosi székek” kialakulásának előzményei a 17. században*, (Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae, vol. 3) Budapest – Róma, 2005, 106–160.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>11</sup> Cites ibid. 141.

Esztergom was not only a simple Ordinary, but a legatus natus as well. (Lippay did not know that the Nuncio was keeping by himself the authorization for dispensation addressed to the Primate, the delivering of which depended on his own deliberation!) It would be to make clear the role played in this affair by the agent of the Hungarian episcopacy, Pietro Giacomo Favilla dead on 24 April 1654<sup>12</sup> as well as by his successor, Larzona-Favilla. Until special researches on this topic we can only suppose that these personal issues could influence the judgement and settling of Parthenius' case, but on the base of the aforementioned data these connections do seem to be more than bare hypotheses.

4. Why did the Cardinals return to the original, simple solution? They admitted that this was the easiest way to go. The report of Lippay had clearly shown that all other versions would have been necessarily involving the King, and the nominations would have directed the case to the marsh soil of the *ius patronatus supremum* which would have increased the tension between the Holy See and the Court of Vienna. I think this was kept in view by or advised to the new Pope, Alexander VII, because the bishopric of Parthenius seemed less important than new conflicts to be assumed for it. The carrying out of the dispensation by Lippay appeared as if the Primate was working inside his venue.

#### 4. Problems connected by the Church system

The managing of Parthenius' case makes clear that it was at stake a coordination not only of two rites, but of two different, all encompassing Church systems. The elected bishop of Munkács and his clergy expected a simple and brief confirmation like that which they had received until the union act from the Princes of Transylvania for lack of other Church authorities, but from that time on they got into a strange and very complex network where even the inner mutual relations were well cleared. Although the hierarchical order in the Catholic Church was supposed to be clear and transparent in principle, in which the Bishop of Eger, the Primate, the Apostolic King, the Nuncio at Vienna and the Apostolic See would have had their stable and well defined competencies. However, this system in practice pointed to a very different overall picture because the mutual relations between the persons in each position could have blocked eventually the functioning of the system. The Ruthenians were dropped in unexpected way from a community of local type into a „worldwide network” the threads of which were not functioning at all. In vain were the conversion and the salvation of hundred-thousands believers at stake, the power conditions often prevailed over the magnificent principles.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 239.

The delaying of the dispensation damaged the expansure of the Church union according to the contemporary records, but we suspect Parthenius to have exercised his pontifical activity indeed until 1655 as if a bishop recognized by Rome, otherwise he would have been abandoned by all his followers.<sup>13</sup> The Jesuits at Ungvár took no care of the actual opinion of the Holy Office about his episcopacy, they dealt with the Uniate prelate like an ordinary Catholic bishop.<sup>14</sup> Parthenius' position was instable not so much in the eyes of the clergy or of the faithful, but of the Catholic landlords and the bishop of Eger who did not treat him as an equal partner without his confirmation by the Apostolic See, so he could act above all on behalf of his clergy, who wanted to be exempted from the serf duties. (The contemporary circumstances would be a special study of charting to do for forming a more accurate opinion on the process of the Church union.<sup>15</sup>) Of course, it should have been to reckon on the counter-acting of the Orthodox bishop, who wanted to decrease the reputation of Parthenius.

The final settling of the case in 1655 had very adverse consequences, although the immediate positive decision hid the immense set of problems, which was bequeathed to the posterity to solve and which has brought only later its own punishment. The canonical status of the diocese of Munkács and the relation of his bishop to the local Latin hierarchy remained obscure, therefore his civil juridical status became instable. The problem was handled like an individual question of dispensation therefore it was unable to stabilize the Greek rite Catholic Church in Hungary, thereupon has questioned the Church structure as well as the liturgical and ecclesiological effects of the union.

The original aim of the Ruthenian clergy for a free election of their bishop was never fulfilled, and they had to accept that candidate whom the high ecclesiastical and civil authorities have thrustured upon them.

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<sup>13</sup> Ten years ago Lippay has given an account of Parthenius' qualms of conscience because he had paid to Bishop Sava of Bistrica for the Episcopal ordination. The four-years-long proceeding in Rome was already minimalized by the Primate. APF, SC, Greci di Croazia... Ungheria, vol. II, ff. 19r-24v; LACKO (*op. cit.* at Note 2) no. 56, 247–248.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Okmánytár*, no. 125, 167–168.

<sup>15</sup> We can read in the report by Lippay kept in the Holy Office e.g.: „...*archiepiscopus tantum effecit, ut quadringenti omnino sacerdotes unioni Sacrae Romane Ecclesiae subscriberent, qui et mortuo Munkacsienſi episcopo elegerunt sibi et aliis graeci ritus populis in Munkacsienſem episcopum istum Parthenium*” (FSO, St.St. Q4 – ee, f. 927r), but the same number is 400 by Hodinka! (*Okmánytár*, no. 126; 170.) The estimated number of the Ruthenian population was also fluctuating between 100 and 400 thousands.