

## **Hungarian-British Cultural and Scientific Relations after WW II (1945–1948)**

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### **1. Historical Preliminaries in the Relationship between the Two Countries\***

The large geographical distance and the fact that Great Britain is an island did not allow strong ties to develop between Hungary and Great Britain. Different historical developments and vast cultural differences also hampered the establishing of strong ties between the two nations. The spread of the Reformation in Europe brought changes in the relationship between the two nations, as a number of Hungarian Protestant ministers went to Great Britain to study there. British science and literature influenced the development of Hungarian culture after the Middle Ages. Pioneers of Hungarian modernization, primarily Count Széchenyi, looked on Great Britain as a model. The balanced development of the country greatly impressed Széchenyi and his contemporaries when they went on study trips to Great Britain. Progressive Hungarian political forces were always interested in the “model country” of bourgeois development and industrialization.

Hungary did not occupy a central position in the interests of the United Kingdom, although some British travelers recorded their memories when taking a trip in or across the country. In the global political interests of Great Britain as a leading power in the world, Central Europe only received limited attention. It is natural therefore that the British power elite only paid attention to Hungary occasionally, for instance, at conferences about the international balance of power. As Great Britain regarded Hungary as part of the Austrian, German and Russian sphere of interests, British diplomacy did not pay much attention to Hungary. British public opinion also took relatively limited interest in Hungary, except at the time of the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence. At this time a profound interest in and sympathy towards Hungary was observed in Britain. This sympathy proved very durable, although Great Britain was one of the decisive powers that imposed the Versailles Peace Treaty on Hungary, severely and unfairly punishing the nation.

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\* The British-Hungarian relationship between 1894–1918, and the changes in Hungary’s image in Great Britain were examined in detail by Géza Jeszenszky in his *Az elveszett presztizs*. Magyar Szemle Könyvek, Budapest, 1994.

The decisions of the peace treaty did not stir up such powerful negative emotions between the two countries as they did in the case of France, which aspired to be and played the role of dominant power in the region. Hungarian society did not develop such negative feelings toward Great Britain as it did against France, and the general image of Hungary in Britain was much better than it was in France, although the articles written by the Viennese correspondents of *The Times*, H. W. Steed and R. W. Seton-Watson, before World War I had done a lot to undermine the image of Hungary there. During World War I the efforts of French, Romanian, Southern Slavonic and Czech propaganda also contributed to the emergence of Hungary's image as a "sinful nation." Despite all these, the roots of prejudice against Hungary, perpetuated by the propaganda machinery of the successor states, did not run very deep in British public opinion. Although Great Britain and Hungary were not allies between the two World Wars, ties between the two countries - especially cultural and scientific relations were not bad at all. Certain groups from among the Hungarian power elite established important connections with Britain.

This significance further increased when fascist tendencies became more powerful in the country; Anglo-Saxon orientation and maintaining connections with Britain were important from the aspect of preserving the nation's identity and independence. Count Pál Teleki, Prime Minister of Hungary was not only bound to Britain politically but also culturally. Despite the fact that after the turn of the century, and especially during the period of the Weimar Republic, Germany was an international centre of sciences, lots of Hungarian researchers recognised and appreciated the values of British science and were involved with leading British scientists and scientific institutions. Hungarian emigrants who settled down in Britain after World War I did not fail to contribute to developing bilateral cultural relations. Hungarian researchers who had first settled down in Germany after World War I were forced to move to England when Hitler came to power. Several of them became successful in Britain. Before World War II the Hungarian Government was careful to maintain cultural and scientific relations with Great Britain. Domokos Kosáry went on a study trip to Britain as a scholarship holder in the spring of 1938. He visited the School of Central European and Slavonic Studies and came into contact with British historians. Study trips to Britain, and naturally in France, helped Domokos Kosáry see clearly the place of Central Europe in international politics.<sup>1</sup>

The outbreak of the war adversely affected Hungarian-British cultural and scientific relations. For five years Hungarian professionals were isolated from British culture. The end of the war found Great Britain in a new situation as she

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<sup>1</sup> The first professor Domokos Kosáry met in London was Seton-Watson. For the well-known reasons R. W. Seton-Watson was very unpopular in Hungary. He received Kosáry courteously, so Kosáry regarded him as an open-minded scholar and attended his lectures. Kosáry also met Charles Webster and C. A. MacCartney. Domokos Kosáry: *The Idea of a Comparative History of East Central Europe: The Story of a Venture. Historians as Nation-Builders: Central and South-East Europe*. Macmillan Press School of Slavonic and East European Studies. University of London, p. 129.

was one of the victors, but the country suffered tremendous losses in the war and gradually lost its previous role as a world power. The question was whether Great Britain in this new situation had any concept related to Central Europe, and whether it was important for her to establish cultural and scientific relations with Hungary.

## 2. Establishing New Connections with Great Britain

What the Hungarian Government after the Second World War was faced with was the task to establish new diplomatic and cultural contacts with the victorious Allies in general. Moreover, to revive Hungary's one-time contacts with the Anglo-Saxon leanings of the Hungarian intelligentsia as well since the long-lived British orientation of an influential section of the political elite seemed to offer solid grounds to the post-war development of the contacts between the two nations. This was not possible in the first half of 1945, as in that time Western powers did not recognise democracy in Hungary. After the November elections this situation changed for the better. Several countries started to examine the possibility of restoring diplomatic relations with Hungary, offering a chance for her to break out of international isolation. This was of vital importance, as in 1945 Hungary was a member of only one international organisation: BIE (International Educational Association).

After the war the Ministry of Education made great efforts to restore cultural ties with other countries. In addition to political isolation, financial difficulties and travel restrictions hampered cultural cooperation. The missions and embassies opened in Budapest contributed a lot to restoring cultural ties with foreign countries. In these efforts Hungary was able to rely upon the institutions established between the two world wars.

After the general election on 4 November 1945, the first legitimate government, the Tildy-cabinet took office. The new government placed great emphasis on establishing good connections with the Western democracies and the United States, parallel with developing good relations with the neighbouring countries and the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>

Hungarian scientific and scholarly life badly missed close and direct relations with Britain. The restoration of diplomatic connections between Hungary and Great Britain on 16 September 1947, and the recommencement of postal services between the two countries created favourable conditions for the revitalization of cultural connections. Beforehand, informal contacts in the fields of sciences and arts had been created. Prominent personalities of Hungarian cultural life believed that it was possible to resume cooperation with Britain, based upon the pre-war situation.

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<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the National Assembly*, 1, Athenaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénytársulat Könyvkiadója, Budapest, 1946. p. 23.

### 3. The Fields of Scientific Cooperation

By the second half of 1945 Hungary's cultural foreign relations were being gradually restored, as a result of the initiatives made by the Hungarian Government and the positive reaction of the majority of the partner countries. Fortunately, most political forces in Hungarian domestic politics were in favour of international cooperation in 1945-46. Seeking cultural foreign relations was not only important for breaking out of international isolation, but also because a globalisation process had begun in international science and no country was able to escape its effects, and all countries wishing to modernise their economies had to actively participate in it.

It was Great Britain with which Hungary established the closest scientific cooperation after the war. For Hungarian science it was important whether or not they were able to find the patterns that would serve as a model. Hungarian scientists therefore made efforts to participate at as many international conferences as possible, and they urged their foreign partners to establish ties with Hungary.

On 20 July 1945, the Council of Péter Pázmány University, Budapest, decreed that in order to promote Anglo-Hungarian scientific and cultural contacts, the Rector of the University should invite certain outstanding representatives of British scholarship together with scientists and authors of Hungarian birth now living in England to give lectures in Hungary in the academic year of 1946-47.<sup>3</sup> On 7 September 1945, a conference was organized by the Free Trade Union of Teachers at which the participants agreed that the most important task, "a task of vital national interest" - as some of the speakers put it - was to set up and promote direct contacts with British cultural and educational authorities.<sup>4</sup>

It was in such an atmosphere that foreign scholarships came to be allotted for the first time after the war on 23 August, 1945. Ten out of a total of eighty-nine were for British institutions.<sup>5</sup> The British Council was involved in the re-establishment of Hungarian-British cultural and scientific connections very early on after the war. In 1946 biochemist László Kovásznai; Pál Berg, a prominent teacher of English, who had done some fine research in the history of teaching English in Hungary; internationally renowned chemist János Gergely; biologist László Krasznai; literary historian Tibor Lutter, later professor of English at Loránd Eötvös University; Sándor Maller, teacher of English, later the representative of the Hungarian UNESCO-Committee in Paris; architect Elemér Moholy; János Száva; Oszvald Szemerényi; György Szentner, and Károly Szladits, a distinguished jurist received scholarships in England.<sup>6</sup> Szladits went to London University, architect Elemér Moholy studied at the London College

<sup>3</sup> New Hungarian National Archives (UMKL)

<sup>4</sup> "Egyetem, tudomány és akadémia." *Embernevelés*, 1945, vols 4-3, pp. 133, 135-136.

<sup>5</sup> *Magyar Közlöny*, 1945, vol. 108.

<sup>6</sup> UMKL-XIX-1-1e. 1946-26. p. 229.

of Architecture, Kovásznai at Cambridge, chemist János Gergely and literary critic Tibor Lutter conducted research at Leeds.<sup>7</sup>

With the Election held on 4 November 1945 and the establishment of the democratic coalition government, the former obstacles to negotiating official cultural and scientific cooperation between the United Kingdom and Hungary were almost immediately removed. In his letter of 20 January 1946 to Dezső Keresztúry, Minister of Education Anthony Withe, Secretary General of the British Council expressed his hope that “cultural and educational contacts between the United Kingdom and Hungary shall be re-established and even maintained on a higher level than prior to 1939”. Nor did he fail to emphasise that “the British council is prepared to co-operate with the Hungarian institutions of culture and education” within the possibilities provided by its human and financial resources. A. T. S. Withe also trusted that British-Hungarian cultural relations would soon be based upon solid foundations.<sup>8</sup> In his reply on 26 February 1946, Dezső Keresztúry reinforced that the Hungarian Government’s most sincere wish was to make the contacts with the British Council as close and fruitful as possible.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime the personal contacts between British and Hungarian scientists were yielding their own fruit. Through the good offices of Nobel-Prize-winner Albert Szent-Györgyi<sup>10</sup> and the world-famous professor of anatomy, Béla Issekutz, some well established contacts had been made between British medical centres and Hungarian clinics before the war, and British institutes hastened to help their war-shaken Hungarian counterparts with reference material and medical equipment.<sup>11</sup> The British Museum, the Irish Academy of Sciences,<sup>12</sup> and a number of Oxford colleges sent valuable book-donations together with a huge collection of expert journals and scientific magazines which Hungarian researchers had been denied during the war-years.<sup>13</sup>

The most important event in the international relations of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the first sign of official contacts between Great Britain and Hungary was that the Hungarian Academy was invited by the Royal Society to the Newton-anniversary celebrations of 1946. However unbelievable as it may sound, the sad fact remains that owing to its financial difficulties the Academy could not afford to send a delegation to participate, so it was Sir

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<sup>7</sup> *Szabadság*, 9 August 1946.

<sup>8</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1946-26. p. 222

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Kis Újság*, 31 July 1946. For Albert Szent-Györgyi’s role in Hungarian science politics see József N. Szabó, “Szent-Györgyi Albert tudományszervező és kultúrpolitikai szerepe (1945-1946),” *Tiszatáj*, 1993, no. 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Kis Újság*, 19 July 1946.

<sup>12</sup> For promoting cultural relations with other countries, the government set up the National Library Centre on 8 December 1945. *Magyar Közlöny*, 1945, vol. 196.

<sup>13</sup> *Kis Újság*, 21 July 1946.

Stanley Eddington, Corresponding Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences who was asked to represent the Hungarians.<sup>14</sup>

The Hungarian Academy was forced to cancel its participation in international organisations due to lack of finances and information. In 1945, for instance, the Hungarian Academy was unable to participate in the International Academic Union. Although it was hardly more than a gesture to British-Hungarian cultural connections, it was still important for the Hungarians that Albert Szent-Györgyi received one of the most prestigious British scientific awards, the Camora Award of the University of Edinburgh.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time more and more British scholars and distinguished public figures visited Hungary. Some of them, like Miss Dorothy Keeling of the London School of Economics and Sir Stanley Uhwin spent a considerable time in Hungary, visiting research centres, libraries and publishing houses, delivering lectures in Eger and Debrecen<sup>16</sup> and discussing the possible ways and means of cooperation.

The academic year 1946-47 saw another group of Hungarian scholarship-holders heading for Britain. Among the illustrious names one could find the distinguished jurist, János Balás; the outstanding literary historian László Kéry; András Alföldi, professor of classical antiquity; prominent art historian László Gerevich; and philosopher Elemér Kerékgyártó - to mention but a few. It is also worth mentioning here that this time the Hungarian Government was also able to offer six scholarships to British undergraduates for the study of Hungarian arts and civilization.<sup>17</sup>

The Hungarian cultural government found it important that Hungarian cultural and scientific institutions should start work in Great Britain as soon as possible. In the case of London it meant the reopening of the Hungarian Institute. The Ministry of Education attributed great importance to the Department of Hungarian after the war, and was determined to raise the funds necessary for its operation. The Minister of Education intended to send a Hungarian lecturer to the University of Edinburgh, in addition to the London University. The University of Edinburgh was given priority in the plans of the Minister of Education because Scottish and Hungarian Protestant churches had traditionally good connections. Edinburgh was therefore found to be a good starting point for resurrecting the bilateral cultural relations.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1946-64. 100; Arthur Stanley Eddington was elected a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy in 1932. The war disrupted normal communications, so the Hungarian Academy was unaware that Eddington had died on 22 November, 1944. *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Tagjai, 1825-1975*. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára, Budapest, 1975. p. 340.

<sup>15</sup> *Szabadság*, 28 May 1946.

<sup>16</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1948-23.899; Domokos Kosáry, *The Story of a Venture*, p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-k. 1948-61-137/6

<sup>18</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1946-64.245.

#### 4. Literary and Art Connections and Hungarian Emigrants in England

An all-important stage in the process of the development of British-Hungarian cultural contacts was the foundation of the Hungarian section of the PEN Club in January 1946, followed in Park Club, London, in April, by direct personal negotiations on the future of cooperation. Prominent personalities of literary life, journalism and literary translation, including Dezső Keresztúry, appeared at the reception at the British Council, and informally discussed the future potential of cooperation. British interest in cooperation with Hungary was exemplified by the announcement of the representative of the British Council that he was going to travel to Budapest during the summer with the intention of surveying the possibilities of more intensive literary collaboration. The necessity of cooperation was emphasised by Dezső Keresztúry and János Gyöngyösi, Minister of Foreign Affairs in their speeches at the opening of the British Legation's book-exhibition early in July 1946.<sup>19</sup>

From the summer of 1946 a good number of British musicians visited Hungary and gave concerts in Budapest. Composer Stanford Robinson, conductor at the BBC, spent a month in Hungary from June 1946 conducting concerts and operas.<sup>20</sup> A characteristic of the times was that civilian organizations, churches, associations and clubs played an important role in promoting cultural connections. Such an organisation was the Hungarian-English Association, established with Zoltán Kodály as its Chairman.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to British scientists and scientific institutions, scientists of Hungarian birth living in Britain served as a powerful link between the two countries. Leaders of Hungarian cultural politics also relied upon the help of Hungarian emigrants who had settled down in Britain in order to resurrect scientific research in Hungary and reintegrate the country in the international world of sciences. As per a resolution made in 1945, the leadership of Budapest University requested the faculties to contact prominent Hungarian scientists living in Britain, and invite them to Hungary. The Faculty of Law invited Károly Pollányi, professor in London, who accepted the invitation and delivered a lecture titled "The Role of Economy in the Development of Modern Society."<sup>22</sup>

After the war some scientists returned home. At the request of Albert Szent-Györgyi, Tibor Péterfi, the anatomist of international reputation, decided to settle down in Hungary after 27 years of working abroad.<sup>23</sup> In the process of repatriation, the preparations made for the return of Lajos Hatvany constituted an important phase. Hatvany had lived abroad since 1919, and moved to England, escaping from fascism in 1938. Péter Pázmány University decided to

<sup>19</sup> *Kis Újság*, 28 April, 1946; *Szabadság*, 2 June 1946.

<sup>20</sup> UMKL-XIX-I. 1946-96.901

<sup>21</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1948-238899

<sup>22</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1946-114-879

<sup>23</sup> *Szabadság*, 27 August 1946. After the fall of the communist republic of 1919 Tibor Péterfi emigrated first to Germany and then to Great Britain. He published a number of scientific articles and developed the method of under-microscope surgery. *Orvosi Lexikon* (Akadémia Kiadó, Budapest, 1972), p. 1011. and *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* (Budapest, 1929), p. 707.

invite the excellent writer and literary historian in the summer of 1946. On 23 August István Hajnal, Dean of the University, sent a letter to Lajos Hatvany, requesting him to deliver lectures at the university from September 1946 or the spring of 1947.<sup>24</sup>

Several ideas regarding British-Hungarian cooperation were put forward in 1945-46. Efforts were primarily made on the Hungarian side, as a result of Hungary's peculiar situation after the war. There were, however, British initiatives and concrete steps taken on their part as well. Such was a letter sent by A. T. S. Withe to Dezső Keresztúry, Minister of Education on 30 January, 1946. In this letter Withe expressed his hope that Hungarian-British cultural relations would soon be placed upon a solid foundation. Another British initiative was sending a parliamentary delegation to Hungary on 24 April 1946.<sup>25</sup> The governments that came into being in Hungary after the elections of 1945 attributed special significance to establish good connections with the Anglo-Saxon powers, including, naturally, Britain. Cooperation in economy and culture was regarded as equally important.<sup>26</sup>

As a result of this attitude of the Hungarian Governments, the reply Dezső Keresztúry sent in his letter to the Secretary General of the British Council on 26 February, 1946, was positive. The Hungarian Minister of Education also found it desirable to enter into a closer relationship with Britain.<sup>27</sup> In order to achieve this, a cultural agreement was planned. This was expected to serve as a framework for cultural activities, to be planned and facilitated by the cultural committees. The Hungarian Government was fully aware of the importance of such an agreement, and expressed its readiness to enter into one. It was, however, not yet possible in 1946. The British Government was only willing to make an agreement with Hungary after the ratification of the peace treaty.<sup>28</sup> There was not much hope for signing a cultural agreement before the peace treaty was signed and ratified. In 1945, before political connections were finalised, professionals and prominent personalities of culture and sciences had cooperated informally. An analysis of the 1945-46 period indicates that the Hungarian Government made the utmost effort to restore connections even in the darkest and most hopeless periods. The reaction of the British was positive. The steps taken not only served the purpose of restoring cultural connections - they largely contributed to stabilisation in terms of foreign politics as well.

In the period of preparation for the peace negotiations and democratic renewal of the country, attention was directed to how Hungarian culture should

<sup>24</sup> *Népszava*, 22 November 1946. Lajos Hatvany returned to Hungary in 1947 and was immediately involved in Hungarian scientific life. The Academy elected him as a corresponding member in 1960. *Akadémiai Kislexikon*, p. 731. and *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Tagjai*, p. 437.

<sup>25</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1946-26.222; *Magyarország történeti kronológiája* (Akadémia Kiadó, 1983), p. 1027.

<sup>26</sup> *Journals of The National Assembly*, I, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1946-26.222

<sup>28</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1948-61.137/6



be presented to the international community and the democratic thinking embodied in it. Hungary was isolated after the Versailles Peace Treaty, and similarly, after World War II. In this situation special political attention had to be paid to introducing Hungary's new and democratic culture abroad. Men of letters and the leaders of Hungarian cultural policy were equally committed to restoring the old reputation of the nation's culture in the world and to creating the conditions of a mutually beneficial interaction between Hungarian culture and universal culture. Hungary was open to all cultural information and initiatives. As a result of the situation of the country, Hungary was the one that took the initiative in the majority of cases. As for British-Hungarian cultural connections, the British Council made serious efforts to enhance the cultural ties between the two countries.

## 5. The Effects of the Cold War on the Relations of the Two Countries

### 5.1 Science and Education

Although the communist party at its 3rd Congress, 28 September to 1 October, 1946, finally broke away from a pluralistic political system, British-Hungarian connections continued. British scientists came to Hungary to lecture at Hungarian universities. For example, Dorothy Keeling, lecturer at the London School of Economics came at the end of September, and Dr. Chrisle, an expert on penicillin, visited Budapest in November.<sup>29</sup>

Several major projects were successfully completed in the early stages of the cold war. Despite the worsening political conditions, the British Council made efforts to promote bilateral connections, and not only by offering scholarships to Hungarian applicants. They also invited Hungarian scholars to participate in two and three week long seminars. The former were attended by 12 teachers, with Dr. Albert Kovács as their leader, and the latter was open for 32 teachers of English, with István Véges as the group coordinator. Three experts from the Ministry for Agriculture and two from the Ministry for Social Welfare were also invited by the Council to attend a one-month course in England. A shorter study trip was organised by the British Council for Sándor Veress, teacher of the College of Music. During his stay in England Veress featured in several BBC programmes.<sup>30</sup>

The ideas of the Hungarian Ministry of Education regarding further development of British-Hungarian cultural relations even at the end of 1946 are illustrated by the initiatives of Zoltán Bassola. On December 27, 1946, Zoltán Bassola, under-secretary of state of ME enlarged on the possible and feasible ways of continuing British-Hungarian cultural cooperation: in his opinion it was the foundation of a Hungarian Cultural Centre in Britain, and the development of the Hungarian Chair at the School of Slavonic and East-European Studies that

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<sup>29</sup> UMKL-XIX-I. 1c. 1948-23.889

<sup>30</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-k. 1948-61-137/6

could best promote the cause of British-Hungarian cultural cooperation. This cooperation, in his opinion, was to include regular lectures on Hungarian literature and language by Hungarian scholars at British universities, and inform English scientific organizations on the results of Hungarian science. According to the plans, the Hungarian Centre would lend examples of Hungarian fine art to Great Britain as well. One of the most important missions of the Centre would be promoting the production of high quality translations of Hungarian literature.

The other activity of the Hungarian Centre, in Bassola's plans, was to inform Hungarian scientists and scientific institutions about the latest results and achievements of British science and about events in British cultural life. From the letter we learn that Hungary also planned to set up a reference library in Britain. In conclusion it is justified to say that Hungarian cultural government attached extreme importance to the due representation of Hungarian culture in the capital city of Great Britain.<sup>31</sup>

In a speech delivered on 29 March 1947, Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, then under sustained attack from the communists, said that Hungarian-British cultural relations had developed in a very positive way.<sup>32</sup> Despite the adverse political changes, prominent personalities of Hungarian culture and science wished to sustain ties with Britain. Albert Szent-Györgyi travelled to England in June 1947 and took part in scientific events at the University of Cambridge. He delivered the plenary lecture at the triennial conference on physiology and an honorary doctoral degree of the university was at the same time conferred upon the Hungarian scientist.<sup>33</sup> In addition to Albert Szent-Györgyi, the director of the Tihany Biology Research Institute, Aladár Beznák, Béla Tankó, university professor of Debrecen, and biologist Kálmán Laki were also invited to the physiology conference.<sup>34</sup>

The new cultural government of Hungary also regarded British-Hungarian cultural relations as important, even if only on the level of political declarations. On 12 July 1947, Minister of Education Gyula Ortutay in his greeting address on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Institute of English at the University of Budapest talked about the importance of colourful and vivid cultural connections between the two countries. In Ortutay's opinion the new Institute was an organic part of the measures taken by the Hungarian Government in order to reintegrate Hungary into the international scientific and scholarly world. Ortutay believed that the gates of Hungarian culture were open westward as well as eastward.<sup>35</sup> Lajos Dinnyés, one of the facilitators of the "people's

<sup>31</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1947-60.183/6

<sup>32</sup> *Journals of the National Assembly*, VII, Hiteles Kiadás, Budapest, 1952. p. 359

<sup>33</sup> *Kis Újság*, 10 June 1947.

<sup>34</sup> *Kis Újság*, 22 June, 1947; Aladár Beznák emigrated after the communists came into power. He settled down in Canada. *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Tagjai*, p. 31; Kálmán Laki emigrated in the USA in 1948. As a member of the Szent-Györgyi school he achieved significant results in biological oxidations and research into muscles. *Akadémiai Kislexikon*, p. 21; *A magyar Tudományos Akadémia Tagjai*, p. 168.

<sup>35</sup> *Kis Újság*, 13 July 1947.

democratic” movement, presenting the programme of his government to the Parliament on 7 October 1947 also pointed out that Hungary was committed to a good relationship with Britain.<sup>36</sup>

The cultural government, increasingly under the influence of the communists, insisted on remaining on friendly terms with Great Britain, and at the debate of the government program on 24 February, 1948 used the Hungarian Institute, soon to be opened in London, as an example to illustrate that the foreign connections of Hungary were not biased and one-sided.<sup>37</sup>

## 5.2 Literature and Arts

Despite the political rearrangement in Hungary, connections in the field of literature and arts did not diminish at the turn of 1946 and 1947. Several British performing artists enjoyed the hospitality of Hungary. Composer Arthur Bliss conducted his own music on Hungarian Radio and with the Budapest Orchestra at the end of November and early in December 1946. Poet and critique Stephen Spender visited Budapest and Debrecen between 9 and 18 July 1947.<sup>38</sup> In the summer of 1947 a Hungarian choir went on a tour of Britain. The men’s choir of the Association of Hungarian Workers’ Choirs performed at the Langollen Choir festival, winning the first prize.<sup>39</sup>

On March 31 1947, composer György Ránki suggested the setting up of a Hungarian Music Centre in London. However much moral support this idea gained in all quarters of Hungary’s artistic life, it could not be realized owing to the then notorious lack of funds.<sup>40</sup> The BBC’s role in introducing Hungarian music in Britain was immensely important. It made Bartók and Kodály popular composers in Britain. The Hungarian String Quartet performed several concerts on Channel 3 of the BBC in the spring of 1947. The Chairman of Hungarian Radio and the head of its Foreign Department traveled to England, strengthening relations between the two radio stations. During their stay they were involved in negotiations regarding the exchange of programs.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of all the increasing financial and administrative difficulties and the political effects of the cold war, new plans were made to maintain and intensify cultural-spiritual connections with Britain in the spring of 1948. The Ministry of Education organised an exhibition in London in the spring of 1948 titled “Modern Hungarian Art” and it was highly successful.<sup>42</sup> British musicians came to Hungary in the same period. Composer Michael Tippett conducted his own oratory, *Child of Our Time*, on 18 June 1948. Tippett also delivered two lectures

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<sup>36</sup> *Journals of Parliament*, I (Athenaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részevénnytársulat Könyvkiadója, Budapest, 1948), p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> *Journals of Parliament*, III (Athenaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részevénnytársulat Könyvkiadója, Budapest, 1948), p. 672.

<sup>38</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1948-238899

<sup>39</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1947-60.183/6; UMKL-XIX-I-1i. 96008-1947

<sup>40</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1947-57.166

<sup>41</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1948-61-137/6

<sup>42</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1947-167.145; UMKL-XIX-I-1e.1948-245-912

about Morley College, visited several musical institutions,<sup>43</sup> and was invited to be a member of the jury at the Béla Bartók Musical Festival.<sup>44</sup>

## 6. A Draft Cultural Agreement Between Hungary and England

After 1946 the Hungarian Government found entering into a cultural agreement with Great Britain increasingly important. Britain made a similar treaty with Belgium in 1946, and was in an advanced stage of negotiations with Holland, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Brazil and Italy. Dezső Keresztúry believed that Great Britain would favourably receive a Hungarian initiative in this field.

He therefore wrote a letter to the Foreign Minister about the possibilities of making a cultural agreement with Britain on 3 October, 1946. The letter indicates that Keresztúry intended to start negotiations with the British Empire regarding a bilateral cultural treaty.<sup>45</sup> As an answer to the letter of the Minister of Education, the Cultural Department of the Foreign Ministry instructed the Hungarian legation in London on 17 October, 1946, to inquire about the possibilities of making such an agreement with Britain. The Ministry wished to obtain information about the possible reactions of the British Government to a Hungarian approach.<sup>46</sup> As part of the Hungarian efforts aimed at surveying the attitude of the British, János Szentmihályi, Counsellor of the Ministry of Education took an official trip to London in May 1947.<sup>47</sup>

The British reactions to the Hungarian initiatives were positive. They appreciated the efforts of the Hungarian cultural government, but they only showed willingness to enter into an agreement after the ratification of the peace treaty.<sup>48</sup>

The foreign political orientation of the Dinnyés-government, preparing to implement “people’s democracy” in Hungary did not change, at least as far as Britain was concerned. The new Minister of Education, Gyula Ortutay, also found the cultural agreement with Britain important. Ortutay dispatched a letter to Foreign Minister Erik Molnár on 30 October, 1947, in support of a cultural agreement between Britain and Hungary. Ortutay believed that the British Government would react positively to the Hungarian initiative. He requested that Erik Molnár contact the British Foreign Office, through the Hungarian legation in London. The Minister of Education also dispatched a letter to R. G. G. McNabhei, representative of the British Council so as to promote the issue of the agreement.<sup>49</sup>

On 16 December 1947, Ortutay wrote another letter to the Foreign Minister urging the preparations of the planned agreement. Ortutay was encouraged to

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<sup>43</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1948-238.899

<sup>44</sup> UMKL-XIX-I-1e. 1948-252.655

<sup>45</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1946-61.559/6

<sup>46</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1946-61.559

<sup>47</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1948-61-137/6

<sup>48</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1948-6137/6

<sup>49</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1947-63.413/6

support the agreement because he had been informed by Helm, British Ambassador to Hungary, that the British Government was ready to give a positive answer to the Hungarian idea of drafting a cultural agreement. Ortutay therefore requested Erik Molnár to start inquiries in London through the Hungarian Embassy without delay.<sup>50</sup> By December 1947, a draft copy was drawn up, in which it was emphasised that the treaty was destined to promote the spiritual, artistic and scientific activities of the two nations through exchanging their cultural values. The importance of the agreement is eloquently illustrated by the fact that it was planned to be signed by the Queen on the British side, and the President of the Republic on the Hungarian side.

The draft contained sixteen articles, each consisting of two parts. Each was devoted to detailed projects for setting up university chairs, cultural institutes, exchanging experts, establishing foundations, and concrete plans for co-operation between scholarly and scientific societies, etc. An all-important role was allotted to would-be joint committees as responsible for putting the projects into practice. The treaty was meant for five years and was to come into force right upon its ratification.<sup>51</sup>

Positive omens greeted the year 1948: on 2 January under-secretary of state Iván Boldizsár telegraphed István Bede, the London envoy, directing him to inform the British diplomatic circles concerned that the Hungarian Government was ready to begin the negotiations of the cultural treaty. Having received this telegram, Bede immediately sent a note to Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin and, at the same time, gave detailed information to Ian MacDermott, head of the cultural section of the Foreign Office, about the Hungarian ideas. The Hungarian envoy called on the Ministry of Education as well, where Christopher Tomlinson promised to promote the case of co-operation. As if to demonstrate the importance of the British-Hungarian cultural and scientific cooperation, the British Minister of Education took part at the opening ceremony of the Hungarian Arts Exhibition in London on 30 April, 1948.

In the meantime, however, certain unfavourable changes were taking place in Hungary's foreign and home policies. Almost on the same day István Bede was warned by certain officials of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be cautious about the negotiations of the British-Hungarian cultural treaty, since they might "disturb" the simultaneous consultations concerning similar treaties with neighbouring countries. It meant that the British-Hungarian contacts and a possible co-operation were looked upon as incompatible with the unified anti-imperialist foreign policies of the East-European communist countries. All this was the prelude to the would-be dominance of the extremely hostile views and tendencies in their cultural policies associated with the setting up of the Cominform later that year. It is not surprising that Ambassador István Bede requested instructions from Jenő Czinkótszky, head of the cultural section of the

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<sup>50</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1947-63.969/2

<sup>51</sup> No. 116/b.

Foreign Ministry as to what political orientation to follow and what the general framework of Hungarian foreign policy was.<sup>52</sup>

Although both parties attributed considerable importance to the cultural agreement before the end of 1947, the gradual build up of the totalitarian system in Hungary and the cold war made signing the agreement impossible. Despite the adverse political changes the British press devoted commemorative articles to the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution and War of Independence, as it was also reported to the Hungarian Communist Party.<sup>53</sup> One of the few Hungarian-British cultural events was the centennial commemoration of the activities of Ferenc Pulszky in Britain.<sup>54</sup> The summer of 1948 saw the gradual decline of British-Hungarian contacts, which reached their lowest point in 1949, when almost any kind of cultural and scientific contacts between the United Kingdom and Hungary were rendered impossible. The world was split into two halves, not only politically, but also culturally and in terms of science. The thousand year old European civilization became divided, mutually beneficial interaction between various regions vanished. Hungary's cultural and scientific relations with the West diminished and the one and a half decades of exclusive preference of Soviet-Russian culture negatively influenced the cultural and scientific development of the country. The new political climate, gradually replacing the confrontation of the cold war, made it possible that the cultural agreement between Hungary and Great Britain was signed on 13 March 1963, before the full effects of the *détente* were felt.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> UMKL-XIX-J-1-k. 1947-60.803; UMKL-J-1. 1947-XIX-1-k.

<sup>53</sup> Archives of the Institute of the (Communist) Party's History PTI Arch. 274 f. 21/71

<sup>54</sup> PTI Arch. 274 f. 21/71

<sup>55</sup> *Diplomáciai és nemzetközi jogi lexikon.* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1967), p. 466.