

GÁBOR BARNA*

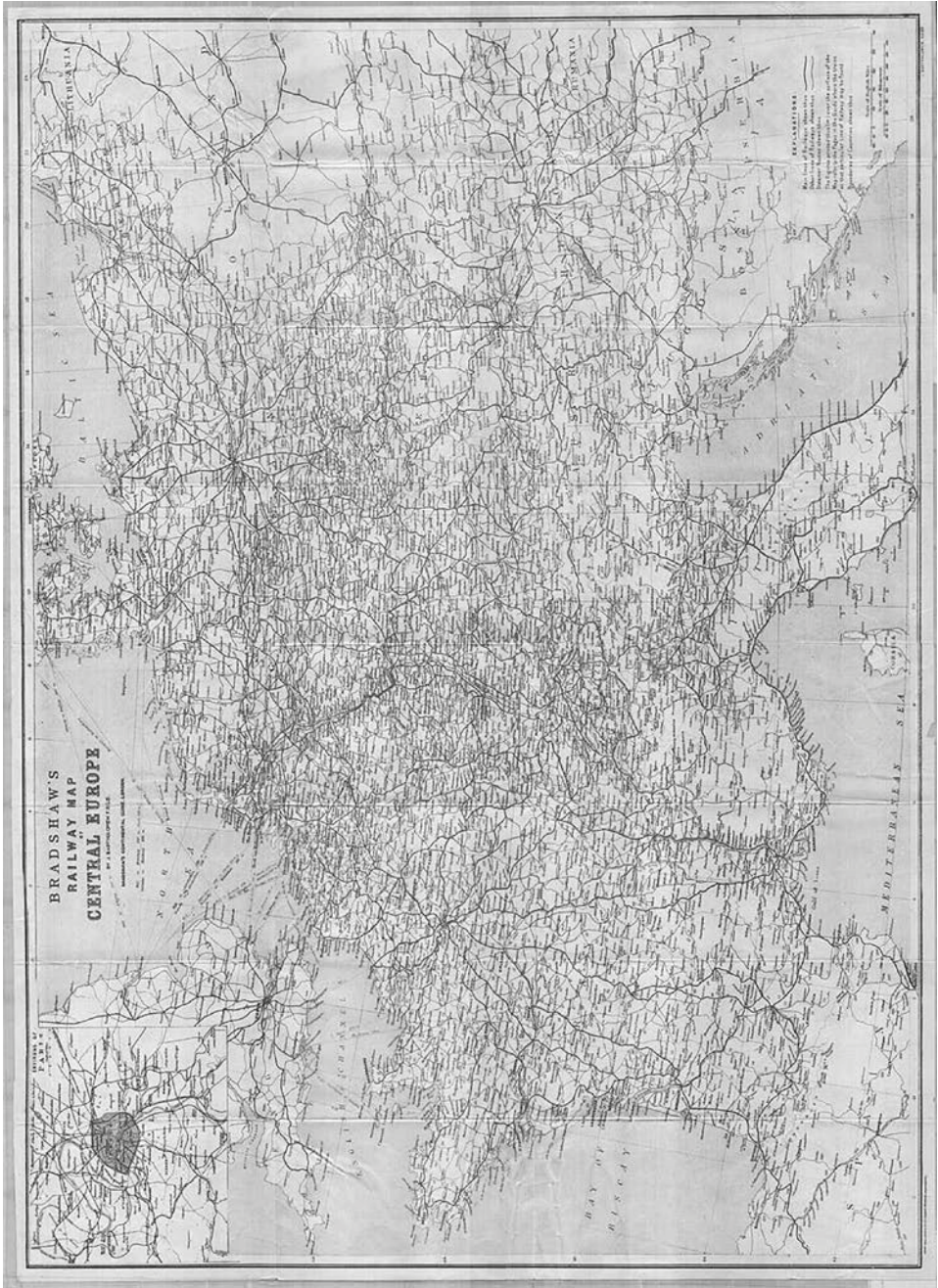
NATIONAL PILGRIMAGES, PILGRIM TRAINS AND IDENTITY-BUILDING

Abstract: The spread of public transport in the mid-19th century changed people's travel habits. It also brought change in travel for religious purposes, enabling a new form of religious mass tourism to emerge. As the railways grew into a European network, distant shrines (as Lourdes, Rome) became more accessible. Long-distance pilgrimages were revived and grew to a mass scale, reviving or augmenting the popularity of some shrines. Special trains were organised for pilgrimages within individual countries too, enabling new trends to flourish. Ethnological research and anthropology of religion have paid little attention to this form of mass pilgrimage that is still alive and has 'traditional' forms in many countries of Europe. The paper analyses the organisation and itineraries of pilgrim trains and their influence on the shrines, as well as the spread of devotional forms, identity-building both within Hungary and internationally. It analyses mainly reports on travel to Lourdes and Rome at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries, touches on the "Hungarian holy years" in the 1930s, and the organisation of pilgrim trains following the change of political system (1989-1990).

Keywords: pilgrim trains, Lourdes, Limpas, Rome, Hungarian holy years, identity building, memories

The Hungarian railways network was built over half a century, in the second half of the 19th century. By the end of the century it had become a uniform network and was connected to the European railway network through the neighbouring countries.

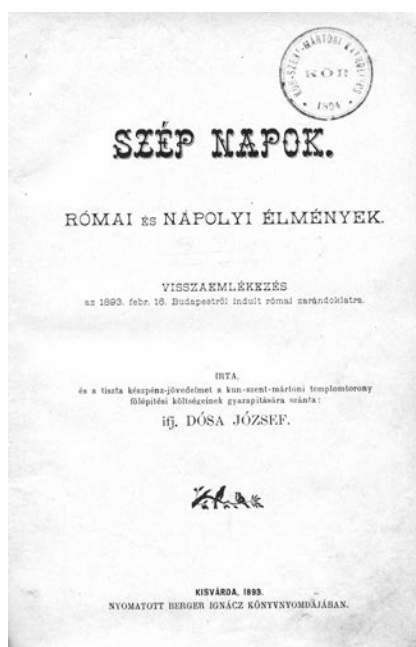
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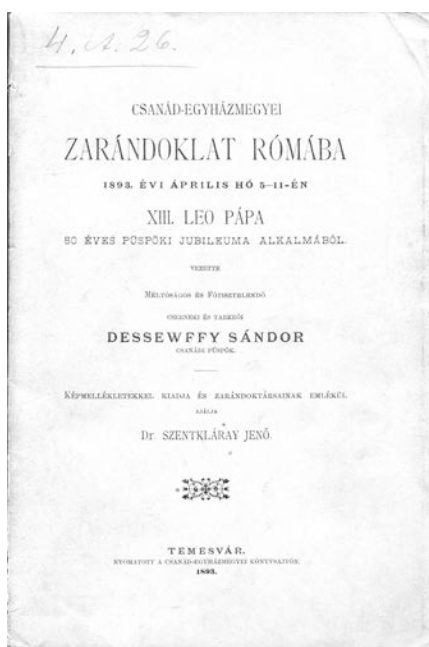
Railway map of Central Europe at the turn of the 19th-20th century

It was mainly economic considerations that determined the routes chosen for the railway lines, but the volume of passenger traffic also influenced the development of the railways. The new technical invention set new directions, opened up new possibilities for mass transport and also had a strong influence on society. Besides individual travel, already in the second half of the 19th century group travels were organised for various purposes. Among them pilgrim trains were operated with increasing frequency and for ever growing numbers until the WWII, taking pilgrims to shrines both within the country and abroad.¹

Tourism anthropology and cultural anthropology research on the history of Hungarian railways has not yet examined the special trains and in particular pilgrim trains. Even the sources have yet to be explored. Printed memoirs of pilgrimages by train, written by people who took part in the pilgrimage represent a special source on this subject. I used them in preparing this presentation. They record individual experiences and impressions, as well as the time spent at the shrine. They were written by priests or lay participants. The oldest travel diaries generally contain mainly the subjective impressions of their authors, while more recent ones also give much practical information on the journey, the accommodations available, travel (transfers, timetables) and often also portraits of the participants as well as the compulsory group photos taken in the sacred places.



József Dósa's recollections of a pilgrimage to Rome in 1893



Pilgrimage from Csanád diocese to Rome, 1893, for the episcopal jubilee of Pope Leo XIII (Desseffy 1893)

1 http://timelord.blog.hu/2012/12/01/az_elso_magyar_tarsasutazas#more4940091



Participants in the pilgrimage from Csanád diocese (Dessewffy 1893)



Participants in the pilgrimage from Csanád diocese (Dessewffy 1893)

One of the important consequences of the appearance of the railways was that they expanded the range of sacred places that could be visited. Faster travel meant that people could travel to distant places without having to be absent from work for long periods. Moreover, the costs came within the reach of more people. As a result the appearance of the railways greatly changed and democratised the social scope of participants in pilgrimages.

The traditional pilgrimages made in groups have always mainly involved the community of a single parish. Although they may be of different genders, ages and occupations, they are all steeped in and follow the same religious tradition and practice.

However, people making pilgrimages by train in the past and today may have been recruited from different communities. The participants met for the first time when the train departed. The collectively experienced events of the pilgrimage formed them into a community, a “community of experience”.

For a long while the organisers were priests, but their role was increasingly taken over by Hungarian and foreign travel agencies. The priests became mainly spiritual leaders. In the last third of the 19th century they were joined by entrepreneurs, urban and rural intelligentsia, and prosperous peasants. The nature of pilgrimage changed: besides the desire for a religious experience, penitence, seeking healing or an answer to prayers, people also wanted to see the world, get to know art treasures (cultural tourism) and go sightseeing. This latter also allowed a limited glimpse into the everyday life of the country or region visited. While sightseeing participants could see the shops, the range of goods on sale, the way people behaved, they could experience their goodwill or, on the contrary, their hostility. Right from the start pilgrimages by train were a form of religious tourism.

The spiritual goal of pilgrimages, beyond the strictly religious content (glorifying God, veneration of the saints, seeking their intercession) has always been to seek a Christian, Catholic community experience. The motivation for participation may have changed. The religious motivations that dominated in the traditional community pilgrimages (penitence, pledges, vows) were joined in the train pilgrimages by a growing desire to see the world. The demand appeared for comfortable travel, full service as far as possible and the opportunity to see the main sights. This in turn increasingly influenced the physical environment of the shrines: accommodations for pilgrims were provided with ever better facilities. The religious tourist trip appeared with the train pilgrimages. Religious practice was limited to church ceremonies. We find tourists who want to see the world outside the church, to visit museums, go sightseeing on foot, get to know the culinary culture of the country they are in. These people were also demanding regarding their accommodation and travelling conditions.

The shrines of macro-regional or international significance have always as it were held up a mirror to the individual and to communities small and large. In this mirror individuals and communities can recognise their characteristics, what they do differently, how they think differently from others. This recognition can make them aware of their identity with their own community and of their

differences from others. But it can also show the fundamental unity in the differences: the community and identical nature of the Catholic religion and its teaching, the veneration of saints.

The structural content of the pilgrimage has also changed. Because of the more rapid progress, fewer songs and prayers were needed. It was only at stopping places and not throughout the entire journey that pilgrims could come into contact with the local population. But new opportunities opened for seeing the world, there was more time, or simply just time to see the sights of the towns visited, especially where they had or have some kind of Hungarian connection. According to the travel reports and memoirs, the participants also took advantage of these possibilities.

The mass pilgrimages also had, and continue to have an influence on the railways and on travel customs. Travel with a fixed schedule (departure, transfers, etc.) influenced the practice of prayers.

— 10 —	— 11 —
<p>Marseilleből ind. 10:17 Tarascon 12:41 d. u.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Közös ebéd.</p> <p>Tarasconból ind. 1:56 d. u. Cette 5:38 Toulouse 10:22 Aug. 3. LOURDES 5:00 reg.</p> <p>Itt maradunk három napig. Az ottani napiprogramm előtte való napon tudunkra fog esni. Ott leszünk mindenkinek teljes rendelkezésére.</p> <p>Aug. 5. Lourdesből ind. 6:23 este „ 6. Marseilleben reggeli Ventimigliában ebéd Genuában megszállunk éjszakára.</p> <p>Aug. 7. Genuából indulás 6:15 reg. Pisa 10:45 RÓMA 9:00 este</p> <p>Itt is három napig maradunk. Egyik</p>	<p>napon pápai fogadtatás. A napi programmot szintén előzetesen tudatjuk.</p> <p>Aug. 10. Rómából indulás 12:30 d. u. Ancona 10:00 este Anconából indulás kora reggel. Aug. 11. LORETÓ-ba érk. 6:34 reg.</p> <p>Itt szent misék, gyónás, áldozás (aki óhajtja). A Szentház és kincstára megtekintése. Reggeli és ebéd.</p> <p>Loretóból indulás 4:34 d. u. Aug. 12. Velence érkezés 9:47</p> <p>Itt a Szt. Márk-templom megtekintése. Innen már haza sietünk. Némelyek esetleg elválnak és visszamaradnak, illetve más irányba utaznak tovább. A tengeren is lehet utazni Fiuméba vagy Triestbe.</p> <p>Cormonsba érk. 4:30 d. u. Aug. 13. Budapest érk. 10:15 d. e.</p> <p>Akik Budapestig nem akarnak jönni,</p>

Timetable to Lourdes, 1912

The special trains also influenced the railways themselves, the way the carriages were arranged. From 1870 railway carriages became increasingly comfortable, and by the interwar years pilgrims could travel in Pullman carriages. People could also wash themselves on these trains. The costs were calculated for 1st, 2nd and 3rd class travel.

**A gyorsvonatok használatára jogosító
KÖZVETLEN MENETJEGYEK ÁRAI**
a hajó átkelési díjával együtt:

Budapestről:

	I. oszt.	II. oszt.
Romába vagy viszont 76 frc 05 c.	55 frc 65 c.	
Nápolyba >	104 > 45 >	75 > 53 >
Florencebe >	75 > 80 >	55 > 45 >
Genuába >	92 > 50 >	67 > 25 >
Milánóba >	71 > 95 >	52 > 85 >
Turinba >	92 > 25 >	67 > 10 >
Nizzába >	117 > 20 >	84 > 40 >
Marseilleba >	142 > 25 >	101 > 35 >
Lyonba >	132 > 15 >	94 > 25 >

**Legrövidebb és legolcsóbb utazás
OLASZORSZÁGBA**

valamint
Nizzába, Marseilleba, Lyonba
stb. és viszont.

Fares to Lourdes, 1912

I. Gyorsvonaton:

	I. h.	II. h.	I. h.	II. h.	távols.
Budapest—Prágerhof	—	—	frt 24·65	frt 19·39	334 klm.
Prágerhof—Triest	—	—	,, 17 81	,, 13·25	284 „
Triest—Velenceze:	lira 25 90	lira 18·45	,, 12—	,, 9—	214 „
Velenceze—Miláno	,, 33 20	,, 23 30	,, 15—	,, 11—	266 „
Miláno—Genua	,, 19·5	,, 13 35	,, 9—	,, 6—	168 „
Genua—Marseille	,, 50 95	,, 37·25	,, 23—	,, 17—	412 „
Marseille—Toulouse	frk. 46·75	frk. 35 10	,, 21—	,, 16—	425 „
Toulouse—Lurd	,, 21 75	,, 16·30	,, 10—	,, 7 50	177 „
			<u>frt 133 46</u>	<u>frt 99·14</u>	<u>2280 klm.</u>

Visszafelé ugyanennyi, tehát oda-vissza: I. h. 267 frt., II. h. 198 frt 28 kr.

II. Személyszállító-vonaton:

	I. h.	II. h.	III. h.	I. h.	II. h.	III. h.
Bpest—Prágerhof	—	—	—	frt 21·38	frt 16 16	frt 10 96
Pr.—Triest	—	—	—	,, 14 91	,, 11·19	,, 7·52
T.—Velenceze	lira 25·50	lira 18·25	lira 12 80	,, 11 48	,, 8 50	,, 5 90
V.—Miláno	,, 30 15	,, 21·15	,, 15 15	,, 14·50	,, 10—	,, 7 20
M—Genua	,, 17·30	,, 12 10	,, 8 70	,, 8—	,, 5 50	,, 4—
G—Marseille	,, 49·15	,, 35·95	,, 26 15	,, 23—	,, 17—	,, 12—
M.—Toulouse	frk. 46·75	frk. 35·10	frk. 25 70	,, 21—	,, 16—	,, 11·50
T.—Lurd	,, 21 75	,, 16 30	,, 11 95	,, 10—	,, 7·50	,, 5·50
				<u>frt 124 27</u>	<u>frt 91·85</u>	<u>frt 64·58</u>

Oda-vissza: I. h. 248 frt 54 kr., II. h. 183 frt 70 kr., III. h. 129 frt 16 kr.

Fares to towns in Italy and France, 1912

From the 1870s students and their teachers setting out on youth pilgrimages were given big concessions. Passengers travelling first class received full service, those in second and third class had to provide for their own meals. Whenever possible, pilgrims on journeys that lasted several days slept in hotels.

Passengers in the different class carriages were confined together for long periods, even days, having their meals, sleeping and – as these were pilgrimages – praying and singing together. The halts on the way and overnight stays influenced hotel and restaurant businesses and life in the settlements concerned. Memoirs place special emphasis on the foreign cuisines, unaccustomed ingredients, spices and foods tasted. Such comparisons usually ended with praise for Hungarian cuisine.²

All this can be clearly seen in the many travel reports of pilgrimages published between the 1880s and the 1930s. After the Second World War, during the decades of socialism in Hungary the train pilgrimages ceased. Strong restrictions were imposed on church and religious life. It is only from 1990 and the decades following the change of political system that we can speak again of pilgrimages by train.

In this short article I shall sum up what we can learn from a few travel reports of journeys to Mariazell, Lourdes, Limpas and Rome in the 19th and 20th centuries, mentioning the special Hungarian material on pilgrim trains in the interwar years, and also drawing on the websites of pilgrimage offices after 1990.

Pilgrimages by train up to the mid-20th century – significance for Hungarians

A major factor determining the train journeys in the 19th-20th centuries was that most of them led to places that had for centuries ties with Hungary: Rome, Mariazell, Czestochowa.

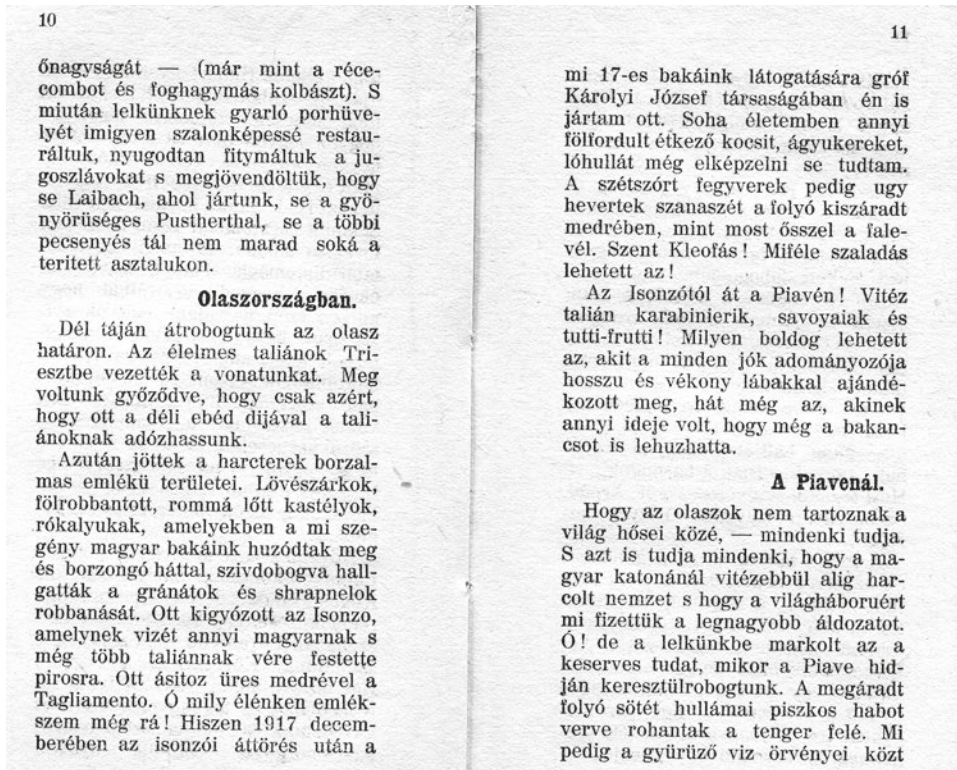
Rome, the centre of the Catholic world, Mariazell a Hungarian national shrine from the 14th to the end of the 20th century – the invocation of its miraculous statue of Mary is: *Magna Domina Hungarorum*. And Hungarians have ties to Czestochowa through the Pauline monastic order (*Ordo Sancti Pauli Primi Eremitae*) and national connections.³

In the 1920s-1930s participants on pilgrimages to Rome were inspired not only by their Catholic faith but also by “patriotic Hungarian national sentiments” according to the organisers of pilgrimages. An almost ritualised manifestation of this was that on the way there the pilgrim train was stopped or slowed in Northern Italy, at the bridge over the Piave River as pilgrims threw wreaths into the river from the bridge. Many Hungarians died at this spot during the First World

² Ifj. Dósa 1893. passim

³ Czestochowa (Jasna Gora) monastery was founded by Hungarian Pauline monks in the 14th century.

War.⁴ This became a regular practice on Hungarian pilgrimages in the interwar years. It is mentioned in all the travel reports.⁵



10

önagyságát — (már mint a réce-combot és foghagymás kolbászt). S miután lelkünknek gyarló porhüvelyét imigyen szalonképessé restauráltuk, nyugodtan fitymáltuk a juszslávokat s megjövendöltük, hogy se Laibach, ahol jártunk, se a gyönyörűséges Pustherthal, se a többi pecsényés tál nem marad soká a terített asztalukon.

Olaszországban.

Dél táján átrobtunk az olasz határon. Az élelmes taliánok Trieszbe vezették a vonatunkat. Meg voltunk győződve, hogy csak azért, hogy ott a déli ebéd díjával a taliánoknak adózhassunk.

Azután jöttek a harcterek borzalmas emlékü területei. Lövészárkok, fölrobbantott, rommá lőtt kastélyok, rókalyukak, amelyekben a mi szegény magyar bakáink huzódtak meg és borzongó háttal, szívdobogva hallgatták a gránátok és shrapnelok robbanását. Ott kigyózott az Isonzo, amelynek vizét annyi magyarnak s még több taliánnak vére festette pirosra. Ott ásitoz üres medrével a Tagliamento. Ó mily élelnek emlékszem még rá! Hiszen 1917 decemberében az isonzói áttörés után a

11

mi 17-es bakáink látogatására gróf Károlyi József társaságában én is jártam ott. Soha életemben annyi fölfordult étkező kocsit, ágyukereket, lóhullát még elképzelni se tudtam. A szétszórt fegyverek pedig úgy heverték szanaszét a folyó kiszáradt medrében, mint most ősszel a falevél. Szent Kleofás! Miféle szaladás lehetett az!

Az Isonzótól át a Piavén! Vitéz talián karabinierik, savoyaiak és tutti-frutti! Milyen boldog lehetett az, akit a minden jók adományozója hosszú és vékony lábakkal ajándékozott meg, hát még az, akinek annyi ideje volt, hogy még a bakan-csot is lehuzhatta.

A Piavenál.

Hogy az olaszok nem tartoznak a világ hősei közé, — mindenki tudja. S azt is tudja mindenki, hogy a magyar katonánál vitézebbül alig harcolt nemzet s hogy a világháborúért mi fizettük a legnagyobb áldozatot. Ó! de a lelkünkbe markolt az a keserves tudat, mikor a Piave hidján keresztülrobtunk. A megáradt folyó sötét hullámai piszkos habot verve rohantak a tenger felé. Mi pedig a gyűrűző víz örvényei közt

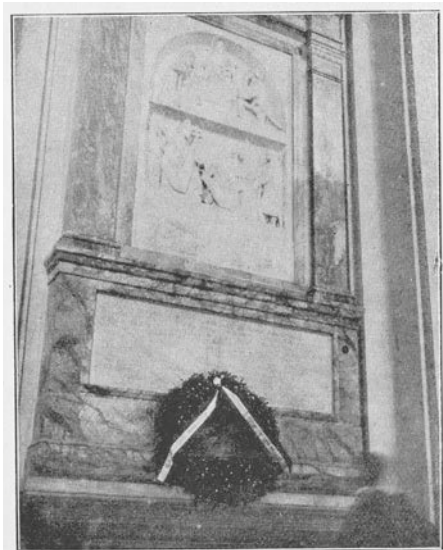
Commemoration of the Battles of the Isonzo and the Piave (Bilkei 1926. 10-11.)

Among the main churches in Rome the Lateran basilica was the most important for Hungarians: it is here that the tomb of Pope Sylvester II is found. He sent our first king, Saint Stephen, his crown. This scene is recorded in a relief placed here in 1910 that is visited by all Hungarian pilgrim groups to place a wreath. Above the tablet Saint Stephen and Saint Ladislav can be seen paying tribute to the Blessed Lady of the Hungarians. This was placed by the Hungarian church in the anniversary year, 1900. According to our cardinal at the time: "our Catholicism is fully compatible with our identity as Hungarians".⁶

4 PAULOVITS 1926. 11-12.

5 DR. CSIKÓS NAGY 1933.

6 PAULOVITS 192. 12.



II. Szilveszter pápának, a magyarság nagy barátjának emléke a Laterán bazilikában.

Memorial tablet for Pope Sylvester II in the Lateran basilica, 1934; he sent the crown to Stephen, the first Hungarian king (AD 1000) (Azuros tájakon 1935. 52.)

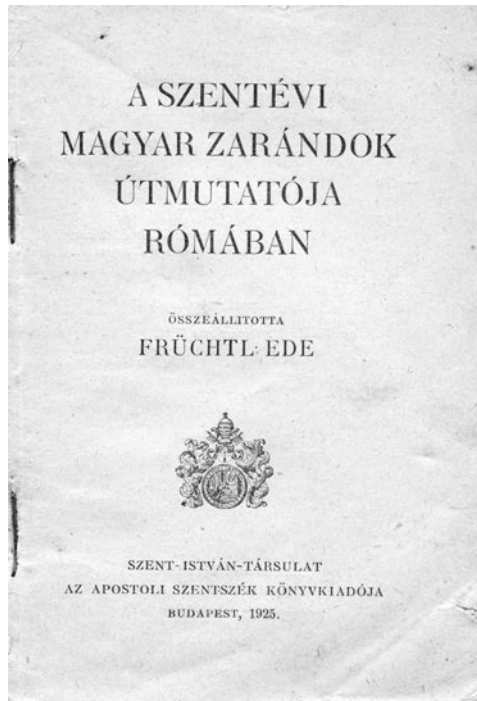


Memorial tablet for Pope Sylvester II in the Lateran basilica, with a portrayal of the Blessed Lady of the Hungarians

Christianity and Hungarian identity also became closely intertwined in the historical consciousness of the Hungarian people: Hungarians regarded themselves as the bastion protecting Europe and Christianity in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire.

The close connection between culture history and religion also has an influence on individual and collective consciousness. Individuals see and experience themselves as members of the big Catholic community. This gives them strength as they see that they are not alone in their faith and religious practice. And through artistic and architectural relics they are faced with the works of their predecessors, with Hungarian history that is also Christian history. The centuries-old itineraries and guidebooks changed, and from the 19th century guidebooks intended also for tourists began to appear. A fine example of this is the “Guide to Rome” published for the 1925 holy year; besides the sights of museums and churches it also gives useful advice on transport and the bureaucratic administration of the time.⁷ In the case of churches, it mentions all the sights and aspects of Hungarian relevance.

7 FRÜCHTL 1925.

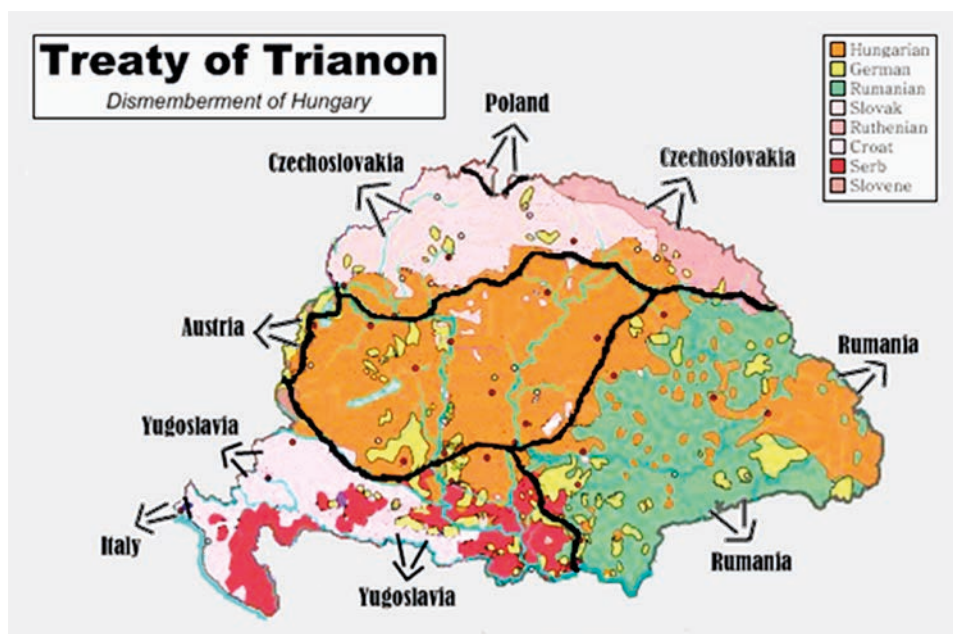


Guide for Hungarian pilgrims to Rome in the Holy Year 1925 (Früchtl 1925.)

What kind of mental condition can be found in the background? Towards the end of the 19th century, and at the turn of the 20th to the 21st century a growing demand appeared for what could be called a Hungarian experience, for the strengthening of Hungarian identity. This is why it was important to seek out anything Hungarian-related at the sacred places mentioned. The late 19th century saw the emergence of the Hungarian bourgeois nation, a certain aspiration for independence from Austrian direction within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. People wanted to show that the Hungarians are not second-class citizens of the Habsburg empire. Familiarity with the relics of Hungarian history could help to strengthen that feeling. These elements of consciousness were important for the group and train pilgrimages. Often they began to play a role in the motivation for participation and were not unrelated to the historical circumstances either.

What are these circumstances in the first half of the 20th century?

After the lost First World War and the subsequent tragic dismemberment of Hungary the national content greatly increased: in the atmosphere of the time people could look for change and hope only to God and Mary, Patron of Hungarians. As a consequence of the Trianon peace dictate, the country lost two-thirds of its territory and one third of the Hungarian population came under foreign rule.



Ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Hungary, and the new borders after the First World War

The national sentiment was deeply hurt. In 1925 separate groups of Hungarian pilgrims from the occupied territories of the neighbouring countries (Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia) travelled to Rome. A large group also represented the Hungarian diaspora in America. Here, in the Eternal City, the Hungarian nation was united virtually. There was a strong belief that the loyalty of the Hungarian people to the Catholic church was a guarantee of their survival as nation. The Pope, Pius XI, also spoke of this.⁸

A good example of the motivating force of national sentiment is the beginning of Hungarian pilgrimages to Lourdes which was new and very attractive for whole Europe at that time. The first Hungarian pilgrims went to Lourdes from the Paris World Exposition in 1878. Here they saw that the shrine was decorated with the flags of many countries. They made a vow to send the Hungarian national flag to Lourdes. Their proposal was embraced in Hungary and in August 1881 a committee was formed to organise the first Hungarian national pilgrimage to Lourdes. Later Hungarian pilgrim groups often had their photo taken with the Hungarian national flag placed at the shrine of the Virgin, the Lourdes basilica.⁹

⁸ PAULOVITS 1926, passim

⁹ EMLÉKKÖNYV... 1883. 118. ff.; PURT [1897.]



Hungarian pilgrims in Lourdes, with the Hungarian flag taken to Limpias (Paulovits 1926. 271.)



Tenth station of the Lourdes Way of the Cross with the Hungarian arms (Paulovits 1926. 173.)

The fact that in 1912 the 10th station of the Way of the Cross – visited with pride by Hungarian pilgrims – was erected from the donations of Hungarian believers can be attributed to the regular Hungarian presence.

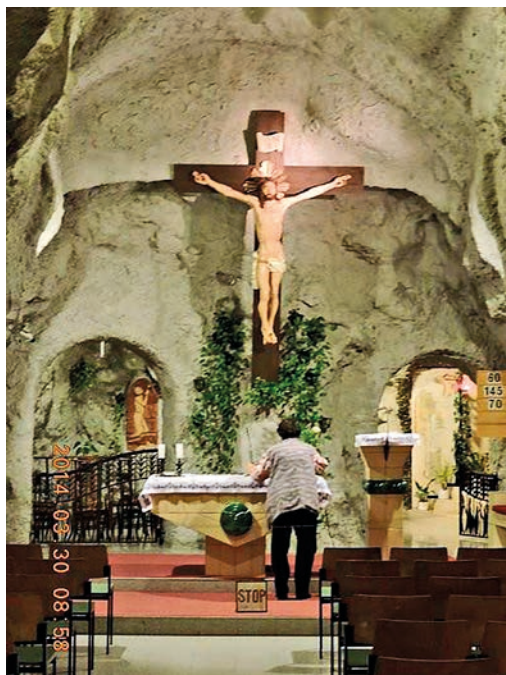
Lourdes exerted an enormous attraction throughout Europe. In Hungary too, Lourdes grottos and altars were built in many places or simply an image of the cave was placed in churches and private homes.¹⁰ The strong devotion to Mary was the driving force behind the visits to Lourdes and other shrines. Hungarians often mention with pride the fact that their country is “Mary’s country”: our first king, Saint Stephen, after the tragic death of the heir to the throne, committed his kingdom and people to the protection of the Virgin Mother. This is reflected in the donation of Hungarian flags to Lourdes.

Right up to the present this circumstance has given a strong Hungarian national content to train pilgrimages to destinations outside Hungary.

From 1919, according to the testimony of several people the figure of Jesus on the crucifix on the main altar of the church in the small Basque village of Limpias moved, its face and mouth moved and drops of blood fell from its forehead crowned with thorns.



Prayer sheet for the 1925 Holy Year with an image of the Limpias crucifix



The Limpias crucifix in the Cave Church, Budapest

¹⁰ These were erected mainly by local religious confraternities, especially the Living Rosary Confraternity.

“He suffered for mankind and showed again the terrible agony of death”, to awaken the world’s conscience.¹¹ People from all over Europe visited the Limpas cross in those years. But the Hungarians were the first to place their nation symbolically before and under the shelter of the crucifix.¹² Some of the Hungarian groups to Lourdes or Limpas also visited the Habsburg family who lived in the vicinity.¹³ This is an indication that in the 1920s in some groups of the population sympathy with the exiled Habsburg royal family was also mixed with the religious motivations and national sentiments.

The aim of pilgrimages to Rome was always to show loyalty to the Catholic church, the Holy See and the pope. This is confirmed by the fact that in 1925, the Rome Holy Year, seven national pilgrimages organised by bishops and dioceses set out at different times to Rome. These were all pilgrimages by train made by hundreds of people in smaller groups (members of different orders, schools, Scouts, etc.).¹⁴ The beatifications and canonisations (Saint Peter Canisius, Terese of Lisieux, Bernadette Soubirous) added to the attraction of the 1925 holy year.

In 1925, the first holy year after the First World War, and in the extraordinary jubilee in 1933 marking the 1900th anniversary of our salvation (the death and resurrection of Jesus), Hungarian pilgrims naturally performed the religious obligations involved in pilgrimages (visiting the patriarchal basilicas, confession, communion, prayers for the pope). But according to the evidence of the published reports of the pilgrimages, sightseeing, visits to the ancient Roman ruins, the basilicas and the Vatican museum were important events. The books contained numerous photographs of these places, including exhibitions in the museums. The aim of these visits, even to the ancient ruins, was to recall the memory of martyrs and saints, and to strengthen Christian Catholic identity through contemplation of works of art. However, Hungarian pilgrim groups consciously sought out places of Hungarian relevance at all these sites. For example, the Santo Stefano Rotondo, the Hungarians’ church in the Middle Ages, beside the Lateran basilica. Some travel reports noted that the Italians were in sympathy with Hungarians.¹⁵ This can be attributed to historical factors: after the defeat of the Hungarian war of liberation against the Habsburgs (1848-49) many Hungarian soldiers fought in Garibaldi’s army for Italian unity.

In the 1930s there were so called holy years in Hungary. 1930 was the Year of Saint Emmerich, 1938 the Year of Saint Stephen, 1943 the Year of Saint Ladislás, and 1944 the Year of Saint Margaret. All these saints are members of the Árpád-house the first dynasty of the Hungarian Kingdom. The faithful came by special train from different parts of the country to the central celebrations in Budapest. Special pilgrimages were organised in 1938, the jubilee Year of Saint Stephen,

11 PAULOVITS 1926. 182.

12 PAULOVITS 1926. 185-186.

13 PAULOVITS 1926.

14 A year later, in 1926 Dr. Sándor Paulovits, a Catholic priest published his recollections of the trips with hundreds of photos. Paulovits 1926.

15 He does not give a reason for this, but the fact that a large number of Hungarians fought against the Austrians in Garibaldi’s army was a big factor.

when King Stephen's preserved right hand, known as the Holy Right Hand, was carried around the country on a train specially fitted out for the purpose.




The Gold Train carrying the relics of Saint Stephen, Kiskunfélegyháza railway station, 1938



The Gold Train, Kiskunfélegyháza railway station, 1938

Tens of thousands saw the national and religious relic at the stations where the train stopped.

These years represented the high-water mark for pilgrim trains in Hungary. In the 1940s the Hungarian State Railways offered special reductions to the large pilgrim groups to several shrines. These images show the concessions for travel to Máriabesnyő and Sümeg.



Máriabesnyői menetrend

MÁV Besnyőig és vissza:					HÉV Gődöllőig és vissza:				
Bp. Főzsefv. p. u. indul	Bp. Kétfel. p. u. indul	Besnyőre érkezik	Besnyőtől indul	Bp. Kerepesi-út p. u. ra érkezik	Bp. Kerepesi-út indul	Gődöllőre érkezik	Gődöllőtől indul	Bp. Kerepesi-út érkezik	Bp. Kerepesi-út érkezik
	5:50	7:11	4:00	5:30		6:36	7:45	5:06	6:15
	8:40	10:02	5:08	6:38		7:45	8:54	6:09	7:09
	14:21	15:31	6:41	7:53		9:30	10:39	6:40	7:44
	15:35	16:52	7:05	8:25		11:10	12:19	7:55	8:59
	16:55	18:19	8:23	9:45		12:40	13:49	8:40	10:49
	18:25	19:39	14:17	15:36		13:40	14:44	11:15	12:24
	20:22	21:46	16:37	17:48		15:00	16:04	13:00	14:09
			19:11	20:30		16:10	17:19	14:09	15:18
			21:18	22:20		17:00	18:09	15:10	16:19
22:10		23:38				18:30	19:39	16:15	17:24
						19:50	20:59	17:36	18:45
						21:15	22:29	19:00	20:09
						23:30	0:39	20:15	21:24
								22:00	23:09

* Csak hétköznap közlekedik.

Csoportos zárandoklatokat
díjmentesen rendez és minden felvilágosítással szolgál

az ORA Kultúróroda:
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Az ORA Kultúróroda által rendezett csoportos zárandoklatok költségeit rendszeresen reggel 1/8 órakor indítják a HÉV Kerepesi-úti végállomásról. (Keleti pályaudvar érkezési oldala.)

A csoportos zárandoklatok külföldön is kedvezményes jegyre oda-vissza 3,20 P. Jegyet a személypénztárnál egyénleg venni senkinek nem kell. A külföldre utazásra semmiféle kedvezmény, vagy arcképes igazolvány nem érvényes.

Train timetable to the Máriabesnyő shrine, concessions for pilgrims, 1941

After the Second World War and today

After the Second World War and then during the decades of socialism pilgrim trains were not operated, either within the country or abroad. Only parish communities organised traditional pilgrimages within the country, with waning popularity.

However, after the change of political system a number of travel offices (Kárpát-európa, Misszió Tours) were set up with the aim of organising pilgrim trains, special trains along the lines of the old pilgrimages, to various shrines. Three of these have become a regular feature over the past decade. Their destinations are

Mariazell (Steiermark, Austria) that has been visited by Hungarians for centuries; the famous shrine of the Paulines (OSPPE=Ordo Sancti Pauli Primi Eremitae) in Częstochowa (Poland); and Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu), a 500-year-old Székely-Hungarian shrine in Transylvania that was annexed to Romania after the First World War. The first Częstochowa pilgrimage by train took place in 1939 when the believers told thanks to the Virgin Mary in Jasna Góra for re-settlement of the Pauline Order (OSPPE) in Hungary.

The spiritual content of the train pilgrimages to these three places is complex. In addition to the religious motivation, other factors are Hungarian identity, historical cohesion, visiting natural and cultural attractions. In late September 2013 a special train took pilgrims to Mariazell, regarded for centuries as a Hungarian national shrine, on the 650th anniversary of the pilgrimage made there by the Hungarian king Louis the Great (1342-1382). In addition to church people, the Hungarian president also took part in this pilgrimage. The Mariazell church is full of Hungarian relics: a statue of King Louis the Great stands at the entrance, another is the second miraculous image, known as the Schatzkammerbild (Treasury Madonna), the gift of King Louis the Great. When the church was rebuilt in the Baroque age, Hungarian aristocrats founded four side chapels. It was here, in the chapel of the Hungarian King Saint Ladislas, that Cardinal József Mindszenty, the bloodless Hungarian martyr of a Hungarian national shrine, was buried. All this made Mariazell a Hungarian national shrine.

In June 2013 the “Black Madonna Pilgrim Train” to Częstochowa was organised under the spiritual leadership of the Pauline monks, proclaiming the “spiritual renewal” of the nation. Częstochowa, a shrine close to the border of the old Kingdom of Hungary, was founded by Hungarian Paulines in the 14th century. The ties to this order have remained very close right up to the present. They are also strengthened by the traditional Polish-Hungarian friendship. This is why Hungarian can be found politicians among the pilgrims led by the Paulines on the “Black Madonna Pilgrim Train”.

After the change of political system (1990) Csíksomlyó, the Franciscan shrine in Transylvania, in the Székelyföld region soon took over the role of national shrine. Besides being the site of the traditional Whitsun feast, it became the symbolic place of the Hungarians’ will to survive: despite the nine decades of Romanian oppression the Székelys have remained Catholic and Hungarian. From the 1990s the shrine became a sacred place with an ecumenical character where some half a million Hungarians gather at Whitsun each year. For the past seven years the “Csíksomlyó Express – Székely Rapid All-Hungarian Pilgrim Train” has operated between Budapest and Csíksomlyó and its passengers take part in the Whitsun feast. According to the agency organising the travel, the motivation is the “uplifting feeling of Hungarian togetherness, the beautiful scenery”.



The Székely Express, pilgrim train to the Csíksomlyó shrine, 2012

Summing up: Catholic consciousness, the feeling of belonging to the Christian Hungarian community and together, and Hungarian historical remembrance also play a major role. But a kind of nostalgia for the railways can also be seen in the case of all three present-day pilgrim trains. All these phenomenon are not independent from the contemporary lifestyle, feeling to life which is determined by the historical situation in the given era. The 19th-20th century long-distance train pilgrimages besides strengthening Christian Catholic cohesion have also been a big factor in structuring Hungarian national identity and shaping Hungarian historical awareness.

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