

## REPORT ABOUT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE FACT FINDING COMMITTEE OF THE RCH

The Fact Finding Committee of the Reformed Church in Hungary was established by the decision of the Synod on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

The basis was laid down by the Synod in the following Zs- 9/2009.03.11 Synod resolution (*About the exploration of the work of the state security among the members of our church under the communist dictatorship.*) The resolution consists of: According to the Synod it is important to get to know and to evaluate the era of 1948-1990 of our Church, to explore the work of the state security among the members of our church under the communist dictatorship, and the examination of the role of pastors and not the role of pastoral officials.<sup>1</sup>

„The exploration and cognition of the era of 1945-1990 was decided by the Synod of the RCH in the Zs-9/2009.03.11 resolution. The aim of the exploration of the past is the cognition of the functioning of the system, the exploration of the historical truth, the exploration of the role of pastors and secular members in the work of the state security and to get to know the different levels of involvement. The Synod wanted to facilitate the renewal of the moral life of the Church with the experience of the repentance - forgiveness - reconciliation, and the mission of the Church on the 21<sup>th</sup> century to be trustworthy, since the Church owes the loyal members, and those who had to endure humiliation, with the exploration of the truth and with propitiation. It also wants to help the present and future generations to see the history and the Church correctly, and to solve the conflicts which rooted in the social injustice of the era.”<sup>2</sup>

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With the warranty of the Synod after consultation with the Presidency Council, the Council asked three experts for the commission work: Dr. Erzsébet Horváth the Head of the Synod Archives, Dr. Dénes Dienes the Director of the Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak, and Dr. István Szabadi, the Director of the Archives of the Reformed Church District of the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District, who all accepted the position. They received their credentials on the inaugural session of the 29<sup>th</sup> September. Their task is not the creation and publishing of agent lists, but the coordination and organization of the investigation, which helps to understand what happened and why between 1948 and 1990 in the life of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

The purpose of the Commission was to determine the concrete directions and to determine the detailed principles of the exploration of the past. The actual historical research was conducted with

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<sup>1</sup> The Presidium in cooperation with the Presidency Council, the Theology and Study Committee and the Legal and Church Constitutional Committee submits the points of the examination and evaluation of these questions. (Budapest, 11 March 2009)

<sup>2</sup> The decision of the Synod of The HRC (Zs.- 27/2009.05.14.) about the goal of the past exploration of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

For details, see the Appendix

the involvement of other historians, researchers were asked to undertake the confidentiality and had to give up the publication rights during the research. The Synod Archives provided the framework for the investigative work.

The Fact Finding Committee had its 1<sup>st</sup> session on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2010 in the Synod Archives. Sarolta Nagy Fodorné, Zsolt Bognár, Éva Kisasszony and later Zoltán Boér also joined to the work.

Their first task was to explore the resources related to the era, to copy and archive them. The documents gathered by the involved colleagues were placed in the Synod Archive, with the original archive sign. It seemed justifiable to get a safe for the separated storage of the documents. The researchers did the research in the Historical Archives of the State Security Services and the Hungarian National Archives of Hungarian National Archives. The research could not be done in the Institute of Political Archives since the Archive did not receive researchers in the past years.

The accurate financial framework of the works developed. The work of the researchers and the receiving of the document were confirmed by Erzsébet Horváth. Our sessions were held 2 or 3 times a year, in which the usual discussions about the harmonisation of the research was carried out.

The members of the Fact Finding Committee tried to reach out to the press several times, and those who gave interviews tried to give only limited information. We emphasised that the Synod created the Fact Finding Committee so the exploration of the past could be solved, and the primary goal is the thorough resource discovery, and the publication in the whole historical context can be the next step.

We have already suggested in our report of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 to overview the gathered materials by the Evaluation Committee established by the Synod.

The idea of the involvement of some experts for the preparation of the publishing came up, which was carried out in 2014.

Éva Kisasszony in the Hungarian National Archive explored the declassified secret documents of the State Office of the Church Affairs (1957-1989), which is 27 linear meters. In the March of 2011 the Fact Finding Committee said that from the approved research directions, the resource gathering in the Historical Archives of the State Security Services related to the church policy of the Kádár Era should be done by Zoltán Boér. Within this framework, finding and obtaining copies of state security documents related to the RCH has been the primary task. The beginning of the actual research was 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The main goal of the researcher was to gather primary resources which helps with the information flow, reconstruction and the discovery of the functioning of the network, and shows how did the members, officers, the political police cooperated in the internal church security against the churches.

According to Zoltán Boér's report:

"We can state about the functioning of the state security system of the era before the change of regime, that the state party tried to gather information about the harmful political actions of church members, the nationalist, the opposites, and their gatherings, by every mean. One of the most important mean was the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. In the socialist countries of the Soviet Block one of the most important task of the state security offices was to keep up the one party system. This statement is also true for Hungary.

The 10-530. order of the Ministry of the Interior about the work of the Main Intelligence Directorate gave an accurate definition about the connection between the parties and the state security bodies: "The state security bodies of the Ministry of the Interior, the policy and decrees of the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party, the laws and decrees of our People's Republic, the laws and decrees of the Hungarian Revolutionary Labour-Peasant Government do their job according to the order and instructions of the Minister of the Interior[...]" The 26/197 order of the Minister of the Interior stated the rules of the procedures and the tasks of the Main Intelligence Directorate.

The tasks of each directorate were defined in specific orders. We can state that the III/III directorate of the internal security was established in order to be the supporter of the state party. Its structure, composition, mechanism and secret legislation rules adjusted to an enemy image. According to its logic every individual or every community "thinking differently" was regarded as opposition or enemy. It is very important to make the functioning of the state security the subject of investigation, since it influences the life of the church community. In Hungary if the agent question comes up, even from the usage of the definition, we are all thinking of those persons who served the former state security or state party interest, on the basis of patriotic or incriminatory data. This approach is, however is quite one-sided for understanding the functioning of the state security system. There is very little said about those professionals exercising (pseudo-) public authority, who participated in the functioning of the system on the so-called ordering-side.

The work of the RCH cannot focus on only the agent question, since one report or just the fact of the cooperation, or even the recruitment documents cannot qualify a person.

For the reconstruction of the internal church security the primary resources are the w-dossiers and the o-dossiers about the operative measures. Unfortunately the records of the inner sessions, and more irreplaceable documents are almost completely missing. However the memo of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> June 1989, where József Horváth had an evaluation. The section head summarizes the 40 years of church chasing activities of the communist state authority. "The main point of the changes are that the specific, clear intervention in the life of the churches, which essentially worked on the atrophying of the churches ceases to exist. So we held back the functioning of the churches ideologically, politically and organizationally [...] For us, in connection with the state and the church, 2 things become extremely important: the first is the information gathering- churches move to which directions politically, and what do they initiate- the other is the influence based on this- it means that the work of the network should be emphasised more. It was said half year before the dissolution of the state security bodies...

#### Group of documents

We have to state that the resources of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security are special joint of documents. The state security bodies differentiate 2 main groups of documents: dossiers and files. One dossier consists of related documents, but its role was not only to keep them safe, after 1950 the dossier became the basic unit of administration. The other type of documents is the registration files, the files together with the documents makes up the operative registration system. Besides these 2 types there are also the so-called "*szálas*" documents which reflects the operation of the organization, and various reference books. Numerous critics can be raised about the documents: the documents of the state security bodies have conceptual elements, and the participants often make their results seem more positive. Despite, to describe and to understand the internal

church security, particularly the state security work against the RCH, the documents of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security are necessary. One can ask if the state security documents really are authentic. What certain is that after the change of regime they were not manipulated.

Therefore, it is not the authenticity of the content of the existing documents which would be the greatest problem, but the issue of the missing papers. The fate of the documents written between 1956 and 1990 by the department of internal affairs makes the informational restitution more difficult, because: 7,000 from 28,000 pieces of O-dossier (operative-dossier) have been destroyed. 101,000 from 110,000 pieces of R-dossier (recruitment dossier) "have been lost", later on 4,739 of these were given to the secret services which continued operating. 58,800 pieces of I-dossier (investigation-dossier) remained, as well as 15,182 pieces of W-dossier (work-dossier), from which 8,803 pieces were given to the civilian secret services. In the summer of 1989, 164,900 people were included in the network register; according to a report taken in May 1990 approximately 110,000 personal folders escaped the shredding action. During the file transfer 3,260 linear meters of documents were given to the Historical Agency founded by the Parliament in 1997. In case of the request of the documents written by the state security organs, the policy officer of the Historical Archives of Hungarian State Security makes certain personal data to be "not researchable", so he anonymous. The main task of the policy officer is to fulfil the research permissions while he has to pay regard to the provisions of the third act of the year of 2003 about the exploration of the work of secret services of the previous regime and about the establishment of the Historical Archives of Hungarian State Security.

The piece-level organization of the documentary materials collect in the Synod Archive is in progress. These documents contain more than 30 thousand files.

The reports of the sessions of the Fact-finding Committee were written by István Szabadi, and they were reviewed and finalized by the members of the Committee. The documents and administrative documents in connection with the internal work of FFC (Fact-finding Committee) are handled and guarded by István Szabadi according to the agreement of FFC. The colleague of the Synod Archive took care of the file protection of the collected documents.

In the recent years the Fact-finding Committee performed the above mentioned work and during the data collection (collecting of researchable documentary materials) an important part of our history became evident. There are such files, which are necessary to look over for more detailed fact-finding, so this work has to be continued.

## APPENDIX

### The synod decisions, resolutions supporting the work of Fact-finding Committee

Synod Decision number Zs.- 82/2010.06.04. made on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2010, in the subject of operating system of Fact-finding Committee (corrected title: About the theoretical and practical issues of the exploration of the past)

1. The Synod, upholding its former decisions (Zs-9/2009.03.11. and Zs.-27/2009.05.14.), reaffirms, that the goal of the recognition and scientific exploration of the era between 1948 and 1990 is to experience the reconciliation in evangelical spirit, to remove barriers of solidarity and to strengthen the conditions of credible service. By this, our church bears witness to the validity of Christ's peace offering, in connection to repentance and pardon, to the church- and congregation building power of reconciliation. Furthermore, the church with the experience and testimony of reconciliation can assist to the process of social reconciliation, hereby fulfilling its mission in the world.
2. The Synod asks the sections of the Doctoral Collegium to clarify the theological concepts in connection with the exploration of the past and the reconciliation, to explore teaching of the reformed theological heritage, as well as to review and evaluate the results of past exploration so far (re-election of officials, rehabilitations, voluntary screening, archive research, theological research).
3. The Synod entrusts the Theology and Study Committee to make a proposal to the thematic coordination of the process of church and social reconciliation (theological, liturgical recommendations, holding "year of remission" in every 7 year, organization of professional days and thematic conferences on the level of recommendations for research projects).
4. The Synod accepts the operating system of the Fact-finding Committee.
5. The Synod entrusts Dr. Erzsébet Horváth, Dr. István Szabadi and Dr. Dénes Dienes to be the member of the Fact-finding Committee. The Synod expects them to keep the accepted operating system.
6. The Synod empowers the Presidency Council, in cooperation with the Fact-finding Committee to select the experts who are doing the research.
7. The Synod asks the Fact-finding Committee to write a report to the next session of the Synod about the opening and timing of the work.
8. The Synod suggests the establishment of an institute within the frames of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary which deals with the exploration of the past, and asks the Presidency to investigate the possibility of the establishment of this institute and to take the necessary steps to the establishment.
9. The Synod asks that those, who voluntarily subjected themselves to the investigation of the Screening Committee send the copy of the resolution of its result to the Synod Archive.
10. The Synod asks the presidia of the church districts to nominate members to the Evaluation Committee from those pastors, who show the resolution of voluntary screening. Those can be the members of the Evaluation Committee, who comply with conditions written in the ordinance of the operation of the Fact-finding Committee, so with the help of either screening resolution or voluntary declaration confirm their intactness. The Synod entrusts the members of the Evaluation Committee during its next session.

## **The Operating System of the Synod's Fact-finding Committee**

1.§ The primary task of the Fact-finding Committee defined by the Synod is to examine and explore the operating mechanism of the repressive organizations of the era in connection with the church. Based on the research of the Committee it should be revealed what kind of tools the regime used for monitoring, restricting and limiting the life of the church.

- The secondary task of the Fact-finding Committee is to carry out an investigative (fact-finding) research in connection with those people who appeared in the field of vision during the investigation of the operation of the repressive regime.
- At first, the Committee has to make the collection and discovery of the documents left from specific eras and guarded by different archives.
- The collected documents and materials – serving the goal of research – have to be given to the Synod Archive.
- After the collection of documents, it is necessary to classify and group the materials.
- The Fact-finding Committee makes a written memorandum about its research and exploration results in every three month. It is necessary to define the addressee of the memorandum. In this respect it is worth considering the initiation of the Evaluation Committee – as the supporter of the research of Fact-finding Committee.
- The reports, memorandums of the Committee are not yet open to the public and they are not for publication. It is necessary to define when and in which circles should the (partial) results of the research be publicized.

2.§ The operational and personal conditions of the Fact-finding Committee:

- The Fact-finding Committee made up of maximum 5, historian-archivist qualified professionals, who make a vow of secrecy, furthermore - in the case when they do not get through screening procedures, and therefore there is no official judicial confirmation about their intactness – they declare that they had no connection with the repressive regime, they did not write reports. The members of the Committee get their mandate from the Synod and they take an oath in front of the Synod before starting their assignment.
- The members of the Committee receive honorarium for their work, which corresponds to the scientific research income which is in force according to the current provisions.
- For the operation of the Fact-finding Committee necessary budget covering the office background, the copying as well as the expenses of the sessions has to be assured.

3.§ The establishment of the Evaluation Committee

- In favour of the work, the guidance and the constant communication of the Committee it seems necessary to establish the so called Evaluation Committee as soon as possible. It is required to establish the Evaluation Committee in order to avoid the direct participation of the church leadership or its leading body in the process of fact-finding. Even the appearance should be avoided according to which the fact-finding serves goals and aspects of church governance. According to the concept, the Evaluation Committee would be that body which transmit clients will and aspects towards the researchers and historians. This is the body which is the addressee of the memorandums of the Fact-finding Committee and also their first processor.

4.§ The question of the publicity of the researches

- The Study Committee suggests, that the Synod determine in which state of the historical research and in which form is it necessary to publicize the results. The committee suggests that the Synod consider that the first public disclosure should be made within 3 years, as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.
- The Study Committee suggests that the Evaluation Committee should get authority to consider, think about open questions and submit them to the Synod.

#### 5.§ The theological - spiritual context of the retrospection and reminiscence

- The Study Committee reaffirms the materials summarized in its first written proposal, which suggests that the confrontation with the past, remembrance and a well-prepared work related to forgiveness should start in the community.
- The Committee recommends that, as long as the first phase of the operation of Fact Finding Committee - the processing and organization of materials - is still in progress, a variety of symposiums, liturgical occasions, studies, conferences should help the creation of the exploration of the past within the Church.