

The thesis basically covers and analyses the period between 1849 and 1852, but starts with the analysis of the relationship between the April Laws and the Conservatives, as this is essential in the light of the later attitude of the Conservatives in the years after the Revolution and the War of Independence.

The thesis is divided into five major chapters: the first part covers the activities of the Conservative movement from February 1849 until the appointment of Baron Karl Geringer as imperial commissioner; the second part reviews the activities of the conservative movement from the summer of 1849 until April 1850; the third part focuses on the joint Conservative memorandum of April 1850; the fourth part deals with the period between the publication of the memorandum and the revocation of the March Constitution; and the fifth and final part is about Count George Apponyi's memorandum of 1852. All the four documents are known to have been written during the previously mentioned period, reflecting the ideas and views of the Conservative leaders, and can therefore be seen as the programme reflecting the collective opinion of the group.

These are the memorandum of the secret Hungarian committee led by George Apponyi in the spring of 1849, the memorandum of Count Emil Desseffy in May (and June) 1849, the joint memorandum of the Conservatives in April 1850, and Apponyi's memorandum of 1852. In this sense, Apponyi's two memoirs frame the subject of this thesis, but they cannot be considered the sole intellectual products of Apponyi.

The main body of the work is therefore an examination of the period from the spring of 1849, when the Constitution of 4 March was published, to March 1852, when the commission was working on the definitive settlement. February and March 1849 can be explained, in addition to the reasons already mentioned, by the fact that it was the Constitution of 4 March that first confronted the conservatives, who were confronted with the revolution of 1848 and were trying to approach the government of Vienna, with the feeling of being caught in middle of the nation and dynasty, and that their political position and programme became more or less oppositional to the imperial point of view. This did not, of course, mean a break in their relations with the imperial political elite, and they continued to try to stay close to the fire. The date of March 1852, which is the closing date of this thesis, is chosen because, after Apponyi's memorandum, the conservatives refrained from openly expressing their views until 1857. Up to that year, they shifted the focus of their activities from the political sphere to socio-cultural life. After several failures, it was probably at this time that they finally realised that the reorganisation of the state institutions in Hungary after the provisional state of affairs would take place without their participation.