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**Labor movement trends in Eger between 1860
and 1920**

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In my doctoral dissertation, I will examine the adaptation of the traditional labor movement and socialist ideology in the city of Eger during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. The period under investigation extends from the establishment of the first workers' associations (which did not organize on a professional basis) to the parliamentary elections of 1920, when Eger elected a candidate, who ran on an explicitly Christian Socialist platform.

This problem-centered inquiry was prompted by the observation that earlier historiography and public opinion tend to equate socialism with the labor movement. However, alongside the traditionally understood left-wing labor movement, a Christian Socialist current was present in Eger from the very outset. I therefore undertake a comparative analysis of these two dominant currents and also address several short-lived initiatives, such as the activities of the National Democratic Party and the influence of the agrarian socialists.

The dissertation consists of nine major chapters. Following the theoretical and methodological introduction, I present the economic, social, and political

factors that shaped the local development of the labor movement (Chapters I–II). The subsequent chapters offer a chronological account of the history of the various labor movement currents from the 1860s to the 1920s. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the different currents, and the dissertation concludes with a chapter summarizing the principal theses.

While collecting primary sources, I began with the references cited in the secondary literature. For events documented in the press, I sought to employ archival sources as control sources.

I also endeavored to mitigate the predominantly political orientation of labor movement historiography by incorporating new groups of sources. In particular, I aimed to explore the cultural dimensions of the locally emerging currents, thereby situating the history of the labor movement within the broader framework of social history.

A review of the secondary literature demonstrates that the term “labor movement” has been understood primarily to denote anti-religious, anticlerical, left-wing currents. The example of Eger, however, shows that during the period under examination Christian Socialists also

constituted an integral part of the labor movement. The majority of the available scholarship is nevertheless distorted, as it sought to demonstrate the social embeddedness of left-wing currents despite the country's relatively low level of industrialization and the small size of its industrial working class. At the same time, it portrayed the Christian Socialist movement as a current directed from above by the clergy.

In Eger, due to the slow development of factory industry, small-scale industry and viticulture were the most characteristic economic activities. Cultural, political, and economic life was strongly influenced by the presence of the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, signs of bourgeois transformation can be detected within Eger's artisan society. In the wake of the devastation caused by phylloxera, increasing numbers from the agrarian population sought to place their children with local masters or workshops for apprenticeship and training. The new generation increasingly came into conflict with the artisan elite operating within rigid institutional frameworks. The local currents of the labor movement responded differently to this situation. Left-wing groups

tended to magnify the arbitrariness of workshop owners and masters, whereas Christian Socialists were more inclined to idealize the old guild-centered world. In certain trades, ideological commitment can also be observed.

During the period under study, the intensity of associational life also changed. The societies established in the mid-nineteenth century were, by the years around the turn of the century, replaced by forms of self-organization that sought to demonstrate mass support. Nevertheless, all organizations of the period shared the objective of ensuring their members' access to cultural goods and opportunities for education. Christian Socialists primarily promoted religious upbringing and instruction, while their left-wing rivals advocated the application of progressive ideas as the more effective approach.

Accordingly, the fundamental line of division between the labor movement currents in Eger was their relationship to the Church. Despite steps toward secularization, the Archbishop of Eger remained the largest landowner in the city. Moreover, the Church maintained the educational institutions, and the clergy formed part of the local elite. With the spread of literacy,

however, religious and ecclesiastical criticism also emerged in Eger, leading to a weakening of the clergy's cultural influence.

Another important consequence of the spread of literacy was that the mass mobilization efforts of the various currents coincided with the expansion of the public sphere at the turn of twentieth centuries. The first May Day celebrations, followed by suffrage meetings and mass demonstrations, were the first signs of modern mass politics in Eger. The symbolic occupation of public spaces, along with the use of posters, banners, and processions, also provided a spectacle for the urban population. At the same time, contemporary press products—considered the primary instruments of the public sphere—were inclined to disseminate misleading or false information about rival currents they opposed.

In Eger, which was relatively homogeneous in ethnicity and predominantly Hungarian in population, attitudes toward religion and the Church became the most sensitive issue in the history of the labor movement currents. These currents also differed in their views

regarding the integration of the peasantry, women, and the locally significant Jewish community into the movement.

From this, we can conclude that the early history of the labor movement currents significantly influenced the attitude of the anti-religious communist regime that came to power after 1945 — and of its local functionaries — toward the representatives of the Catholic Church, which had played a leading role in the city for centuries.