

University of Miskolc
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Institute of Applied Social Sciences
3515 Miskolc-Egyetemváros
Hungary
zsolt.udvarvolgyi@uni-miskolc.hu
ORCID: 0000-0002-8558-7933

UDVARVÖLGYI, Zsolt András. The Sharp-Tongued Hungarian Member Of Parliament, whose Anecdotes were Published in a Book in his Lifetime: The "Funny Stories" Of Zoltán Meskó. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2024, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 120-136, ISSN 1338-7219, DOI: 10.17846/SHN.2024.28.1.120-136.

Article outlines the humorous side of the life of a strange, controversial Hungarian politician and Member of Parliament, Zoltán Meskó (1883 – 1959). Few politicians may say that their funny stories were published in a book in their lifetime. The book entitled *Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái*. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House] is the main sources of this study. Hungary has a long history of political humour and parliamentary anecdote literature, but the historical cataclysms of the early 20th century, the defeat of the First World War, the revolutions, the crises, the terror, the economic collapse, the Trianon peace treaty, etc., did not give politicians much reason to joke and tease. That is why I consider this book significant, through which we get to know the human side and humour of a politician who later became an extreme anti-Semite and a national socialist, and who once saw “better days”, through instructive and entertaining stories. Through the “funny stories” of Zoltán Meskó, we gain an insight into the main events of the turbulent period of Hungarian history between 1918 and 1920, and the key figures of the period, from the last Hungarian king Charles IV to Count István Bethlen, from Count Mihály Károlyi to István Szabó Nagyatádi, from the social democrat deputies to the smallholder leaders also appear.

Keywords: Zoltán Meskó; Parliament; Hungary; anecdote; political humour;

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Článok približuje humornú stránku života kontroverzného maďarského politika a poslanca parlamentu, Zoltána Meskóa (1883 – 1959). Len málo politikov môže povedať, že ich zábavné príbehy boli počas ich života knižne publikované. Príbehy v knihe s názvom *Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján* [Zábavné príbehy Zoltána Meskóa. Rozprávane na chodbe ctihodného domu] sú hlavným prameňom tejto štúdie. Maďarsko má dlhú históriu politického humoru a parlamentnej anekdotickej literatúry, ale historické kataklizmy na začiatku 20. storočia – porážka v prvej svetovej

vojne, revolúcie, krízy, teror, hospodársky kolaps, Trianonská mierová zmluva a podobne, nedávali politikom veľa dôvodov na vtípkovanie a podpichovanie. Preto považujem knihu za významnú, pretože prostredníctvom nej spoznávame ľudskú stránku a humor politika, ktorý sa neskôr stal extrémnym antisemitom a národným socialistom, a ktorý kedysi videl nádej na „lepšie časy“ prostredníctvom poučných a zábavných príbehov. Prostredníctvom „zábavných príbehov“ Zoltána Meskóa je možné nahliadnuť do hlavných udalostí búrlivého obdobia maďarských dejín v rokoch 1918 až 1920. Objavia sa tu aj kľúčové postavy, vrátane posledného uhorského kráľa Karola IV., grófa Istvána Bethlena, grófa Mihálya Károlyiho, Istvána Szabóa Nagyatádiho, až po sociálnodemokratických poslancov a maloroľníckych vodcov.

Kľúčové slová: Zoltán Meskó; parlament; Maďarsko; anekdota; politický humor;

Introduction

Zoltán Meskó (1883 – 1959), was a unique figure in the history of Hungarian politics between the two world wars. He began his career as a military officer, which he continued as a politician from 1917 until 1944. For a brief time, he held several posts as State Secretary (Smallholder Affairs, Agriculture and Interior), and in 1920 he played a prominent role in the organisation of the Smallholders' Party. In the 1920s, as a member of the Smallholders' Party and then of the Unity Party (this was the ruling party in the Kingdom of Hungary at the time), he was active in politics and public life, both within the walls of Parliament and in other forums. His witty remarks, jokes and anecdotes have been published in book form. The book entitled *Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján* [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House] compiled by Gyula Vidor¹ is the main source of my present study.² The book is a portrait of a jovial figure, an active and influential politician who was also entertaining, witty and joking. In this paper, I will present the Meskó-related stories in my study, without claiming to be exhaustive, which – in my opinion – were a striking example of political humour in Hungary in the period following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Among the many funny stories I have tried to highlight a typical case from each period (for example, the events of autumn 1918), and I have aimed to make these jokes about Hungarian issues and matters, which were made at the expense of Hungarian politicians, understandable to foreign readers.

It should be noted in the introduction that later Meskó became increasingly anti-Semitic, Nationalist in the 1930s, radicalised in his rhetoric and interpellations and was one of the forerunners of the Hungarian Arrow Cross movement. The first significant national socialist parties were formed in Hungary in the early 1930s. Prior to that, only completely insignificant initiatives had appeared (fascist parties, national parties). The first to be “infected by the brown plague” in Parliament was Zoltán Meskó. On 16 June 1932, he announced the formation of the National Socialist Hungarian Agricultural Labourers' and Workers' Party

¹ Vidor, Gyula (1888 – 1945?) was a Hungarian journalist, writer and editor.

² VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). 'Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján' [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrédy Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925.

within the walls of the Parliament building. Meskó was the first to present a national socialist programme in the Hungarian Parliament, but this study will briefly outline his “funny stories” from 1918 until the mid-1920s and does not mention in details the not at all funny national socialist Meskó and his role in parliament in the 1930s.

The real great figures of political humour in Hungary in the 19th century

If we look at political humour in Hungary and start researching who were the prominent politicians who made a name for themselves with their jokes and anecdotes, in addition to their political achievements, we find the greatest figures from the second half of the 19th century. Ferenc Deák (1803 – 1876), a lawyer, politician, Member of Parliament, Minister of Justice in the Batthyány government (1848), one of the greatest statesmen of Hungary, and “the Wise Man of the Nation”, whose name is associated with the reconciliation with the Austrians in 1867, was known to have loved witty jokes and anecdotes. He was a good conversationalist, and his tasty tricks and stories were excellent, often making his audience laugh. The stories related to him were published in book form under the title *Deák Ferencz-Adomák* [Ferenc Deák-Adomas] in 1871³, while he was still alive.

Mór Jókai (1825 – 1904), one of the leaders of the “*Márciusi ifjak*” [March Youth] of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, one of the greatest and best-known Hungarian novelists, the “great Hungarian storyteller”, Member of Parliament was also an anecdotal, joking character. He often injected humour into his parliamentary speeches, although as a pro-government politician he was hurt by several personal attacks after 1875 and by his declining popularity. Jókai was a good debater, who could attract the attention of the Parliament with his humorous speeches. He was not a trained deputy but he was considered a professional politician⁴. However, Jókai was an impressive, great orator, as the dozens of his parliamentary speeches, published in a separate volume, testify.⁵

One of the greatest figures of political anecdote literature in Hungary was Kálmán Mikszáth (1847 – 1910), author, journalist and editor. Besides his short stories, Mikszáth’s name was also known for his satirical publicist and parliamentary reports. In 1887, he was elected to the parliament, and with the support of the *Szabadelvű Párt* [Liberal Party]⁶, he was first a deputy of Illyefalva, and from 1892 to 1910 of Fogaras. His satirical and ironic parliamentary stories, written in excellent style, were also published in book form. In 1886, he published his humorous and sometimes sarcastic writings on Hungarian parliamentary life of the time,

³ N. A. ‘Deák Ferencz-adomák’ [Ferenc Deák-Adomas]. Pest: Rosenberg testvérek, 1871. <https://mek.oszk.hu/07100/07115/07115.htm>. Accessed 1 March 2023.

⁴ CIEGER, András. ‘Jókai Mór, a profi politikus?’ [Mór Jókai, the professional politician?]. In *Aetas*, 2017, 32 (2), pp. 9. https://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/49899/1/aetas_2017_002_005-015.pdf. Accessed 1 March 2023.

⁵ N. A. ‘Jókai Mór politikai beszédei. I. kötet (1861–1878), II. kötet (1878–1896)’ [The political speeches of Mór Jókai. Volume I (1861–1878), Volume II (1878–1896)]. Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1933.

⁶ At that time, it was the ruling party of Hungary.

entitled *A Tisztelt Ház* [The Honoured House]⁷, summarising his parliamentary experiences in the two decades since the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, “by which time the great national enthusiasm had already been forgotten by the problems of everyday life: the country’s indebtedness, the disintegration of parties and the emergence of new ones. The glamour of the political halo was lost, and many new deputies had fraudulently obtained their votes, many of whom were already members of the Parliament with no income other than their seats. In 1886, Mikszáth, also a Member of Parliament, embraced the philosophy of life of the Eastern sages: if you are really involved in something, get out of it, look at it from the outside, from a farther distance. And what he then saw, he wrote down: sometimes with sarcastic humour, sometimes with subtle irony, but always with elegance, always with a cool wielding of the sharpened pen, whether he was ‘twitching Kálmán Tisza’s⁸ moustache’ or mocking Győző Istóczy’s⁹ outbursts.”¹⁰

If we are talking about Hungarian political anecdote literature, we should also mention the name of Károly Eötvös (1842 – 1916), politician, lawyer, writer, publicist, Member of Parliament, one of the most famous public figures of his time, who defended the accused in the 1883 Tiszaeszlár blood libel trial and later authored a book on the history of the trial. In Budapest’s social and intellectual life, he was known as the *Vajda* [the Voivode]. His book of narratives, *Utazás a Balaton körül* [Journey around Lake Balaton], written in 1900, is a valuable source work for the history of Hungary in the 1800s, based on personal accounts. It is a collection of anecdotes, a history book, a travel guide, a cultural history, through the eyes of Eötvös, who knew almost everyone personally and had a great knowledge of people and times.¹¹

After the effervescent period of the turn of the century, the Hungarian domestic political crises of the 1910s, and then the four bloody and agonising years of the First World War (1914 – 1918), gave little cause for political humour and parliamentary banter. Perhaps that is why Zoltán Meskó, the new MP¹² elected in the constituency of Kecel in the parliamentary by-election in 1917, who returned home from the front and was recovering from his wound, brought a new colour with his bluster, jokes and sharp tongue. I am not claiming that Meskó’s significance and political activity is equal to that of the “giants” mentioned above, but it should be noted that in the early 1920s, if one thought of political humour, parliamentary banter and funny politicians in Hungary, Zoltán Meskó was one of the first people who came to mind, because I think he was one of the loudest and funniest politicians at that time.

⁷ MIKSZÁTH, Kálmán. ‘A Tisztelt Ház’ [The Honoured House] Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1886.

⁸ Count Tisza, Kálmán (1830 – 1902) was a Hungarian aristocrat, politician, MP, Minister of Interior (1875 – 1887) and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary (1875 – 1890).

⁹ Istóczy, Győző (1842-1915) was a Hungarian lawyer, politician, MP and founder of the National Antisemitic Party.

¹⁰ DOMOKOS, Mátyás – BALIKÓ, Helga. ‘Blurb’ in MIKSZÁTH, Kálmán. “A Tisztelt Ház” [The Honoured House]. Budapest: Noran, 2010.

¹¹ EÖTVÖS, Károly. ‘Utazás a Balaton körül’ [Journey around Lake Balaton]. Budapest: Révai Testvérek, 1901.

¹² Member of Parliament

The life and activities of Zoltán Meskó up to the publication of the book

Zoltán Meskó was born on 12 March 1883 in Baja, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in a Roman Catholic family.¹³ Members of the Meskó family of Felső-kubin (Upper Kubin or Vysny Kubin) were noblemen and one of their ancestors was a baron. The Meskó family had their ancestral estates in the counties of Árva (Orava) and Liptó (Liptov), now part of Slovakia.¹⁴ Zoltán's grandfather, László Meskó Sr. – who was still a Calvinist – came to Baja from Abaúj County, and his father László became a town councillor in Baja. Meskó first graduated from the Imperial and Royal (k. und k. in German) Military School in Kőszeg, then from the Imperial and Royal Military High School in Hranice, Czechia (Morvaféher-templom in Hungarian, Mährisch Weisskirchen in German) and finally from the Military Academy in Vienna.¹⁵ Zoltán Meskó was commissioned a lieutenant on 1 September 1903 and was assigned to the 14th Imperial and Royal Infantry Battalion stationed in Szeged. He served there for a few years; in 1907 he was no longer an active officer, as he was paid a waiting allowance. In 1910, he left actual military service, placed himself in an off-duty status and became involved in the organisational work of agricultural interest groups. He became general secretary and head of department of the Farmers' Insurance Cooperative.¹⁶

After the outbreak of the First World War, he was promoted to the rank of off-duty First Lieutenant with effect from 1 November 1914 and was assigned to the 23rd District Supplementary Headquarters of the Imperial and Royal (k. und k. in German) Army. During the war, he also temporarily served in the command of an Imperial and Royal Infantry Division. According to the Military Gazette (No. 119), on 28 June 1916 he was awarded the "Highest Commendation" for

¹³ Zoltán Meskó's several ancestors and few distant relatives of his family (Meskó of Felső-kubin) were involved in politics and writing. For instance: Meskó, László of Felső-kubin (1851 – 1922) lawyer, politician, member of the Parliament, State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice 1907 – 1909, party leader, county government commissioner. Meskó, Pál of Felső-kubin (1857 – 1930) farmer, agrarian politician, managing director of the "Hangya" ("Ant") Consumption Cooperative, one of the organisers of the Hungarian farmers' groups. Meskó, Márton of Felső-kubin (1868 – 1898) assistant pharmacist.

¹⁴ NAGY, Iván. 'Magyarország családai czímerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal. Hetedik kötet. Mesko család. (Felső-kubini, nemes, a széplaki enyiczkei, báró.)' [Families of Hungary with Coats of Arms and Genealogical Tables. Vol. 7. Mesko family. (Upper Kubin, nobleman, the Enyiczkei of Széplak, baron)]. Pest: Ráth Mór, 1860. <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Nagyivan-nagy-ivan-magyarország-csaladai-1/hetedik-kotet-5828/mesko-csalad-felső-kubini-nemes-a-széplaki-enyiczkei-baro-6654/>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

¹⁵ Correctly: Technical Military Academy (Technische Militärakademie), Vienna, then Mödling. Founded in 1717. The so-called Militärakademie (military academy), the highest level of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's military institutional system. The Military Academy was an imperial and royal (k. und k.), so-called "joint", 3-year, prestigious institution. A significant part of the officers of the Monarchy's Imperial and Royal (k. und k.) Armed Forces graduated from it.

¹⁶ The Farmers' Insurance Cooperative was founded in 1899 on the initiative and with the participation of large landowners. Initially it only provided fire and hail insurance, but in 1914 it extended its activities to include livestock insurance. Together with the "Hangya" ("Ant") Cooperative, the Cooperative also developed a modern bank insurance scheme. At the beginning of the Second World War, it provided support for the families of its employees who had gone on military service and for the dependants of staff who had died a heroic death.

“distinguished service in front of the enemy”. Finally, on 27 December 1917 (with the rank to be calculated from 25 December), he was promoted to the rank of Captain out of service.¹⁷ During World War I, he served on the Italian front in the Dolomites, receiving the Silver Military Medal for his services and was wounded. On 21 May 1917, the district of Kecel unanimously elected him as a deputy of the Party of Independence and '48 in a by-election. After the dissolution of the party, he stayed with Ákos Bizony, MP.¹⁸ In 1918 he was for a time the *főispán* [county government commissioner] of his native Baja.

On 4 December 1918, “the Serbian National Directorate in Novi Sad passed a resolution to appoint a new county government commissioner for each county. (...) A new county government commissioner was appointed for Baranya and Baja. Stipan Vojnić-Tunić, former deputy mayor of Subotica (Szabadka in Hungarian), appeared in Pécs to take up his post. However, he was refused in Pécs. He was more successful in Baja, where he took the post of county government commissioner after the removal of Zoltán Meskó.”¹⁹ Baja fell under foreign occupation and Mesko was taken prisoner by the Serbs. After his release, he went to Szeged, where he took part in the organisation of the national army led by Admiral Miklós Horthy.²⁰

Meskó later served as State Secretary for Smallholder Affairs and then for Agriculture in the István Friedrich²¹ government. In 1920 he was appointed Political State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, a position he relinquished in 1921. In 1920, he was highly active in the organisation of the National Smallholders' and Agricultural Workers' Party.²² He was one of the founders of the National Farmers' Association.²³ In the first National Assembly he represented the district of Kiskőrös with a smallholders' party programme. He was among

¹⁷ Ministry of Defence. Military History Institute and Museum. E-mail message. Reg. nr. LEV-1068-1/2015. Subject: The military career of Zoltán Meskó. 3 July 2015. (Materials relating to Meskó: AKVI 56114, and HM 1920.13. oszt. áll. 132872.)

¹⁸ Bizony, Ákos (1846-1922) was a Hungarian lawyer, politician, and Member of Parliament. After the dissolution of the Independence Party in 1917, he founded the Party of Independence and '48 (so-called “Bizony Party”), of which he became president. The party did not prove to be long-lived.

¹⁹ N. A. '1918', http://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1992/03_1918.pdfhttp://adattar.vmmi.org/fejezetek/1992/03_1918.pdf. Accessed 04.08.2015. p. 19.

²⁰ Horthy, Miklós (1868-1957) naval officer, Rear Admiral, Admiral, politician, Governor (Regent) of the Kingdom of Hungary between 1920 – 1944.

²¹ Friedrich, István (1883-1951) was a Hungarian politician, football player, businessman, MP, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1919 and party leader.

²² The party was formed by the merger of the National Smallholders' Party led by István Szabó Nagyatádi and the National Agricultural Labourers' Party founded by Pál Meskó on 2 January 1919. On 29 November 1919, the United Smallholders' and Agricultural Labourers' Party founded by István Szabó Sokorópátkai also merged with the party.

²³ The National Farmers' Association (known in full as the Village National Farmers' Association) was founded in 1920. Its founders, Gyula Rubinek, István Szabó Nagyatádi, István Szabó Sokorópátkai and Zoltán Meskó were ministers and state secretaries in the early 1920s, and they tried to win the organisation to fight against the “red disease” (a reference to communist rule in Hungary during the Soviet Republic), the workers of the “guilty towns”. (After his entry into Budapest on 16 November 1919, Miklós Horthy called Budapest a guilty city, referring to the crimes of the communists.) Its members were small landowners from “Dunántúl” [Transdanubia] and

the first to call for the surrender of war assets. He then took an active part in the party's organisational and agitation work. He was also the executive chairman of István Szabó Nagyatádi's²⁴ smallholders' party. In the second National Assembly he represented his old district with the programme of the Unity Party, but he left the party and went into opposition because of the increase in land tax.²⁵

The "funny stories" of Zoltán Meskó

Much more than the raw data in the Parliamentary Almanac about Meskó's life²⁶ is told in the already mentioned book entitled *Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján* [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House] compiled by Gyula Vidor in 1925, which gives us an accurate picture of the politician's activities between 1917 and 1925, his political and human character.²⁷ The foreword to the book was written by Jenő Rákosi²⁸, who said that this "strange book will be a very instructive document of our times, and a testimony to the fact that humans remain human in all circumstances. No adversity, no misfortune, no joy, no sorrow can change his nature." He went on to say that "for the last fifteen or twenty years we have been going through what can only be described as catastrophic without exaggeration. (...) And so this book is a record of the reality that people did not forget then, and still do not forget to laugh, that a healthy man is always ready for a joke and for fun. This book is a record of good humour, adomas and experiences, largely from behind the scenes of our political lives, the corridors of the Honoured House, the clubs, the campaign tours with a healthy sense of humour, zest for life and wit." He concluded by saying that "this book will come in very handy for today's sad Hungarian, who can indulge in the pleasure of having a good laugh at the expense of those who have voted for many foolish policies and insane taxes at his expense"²⁹

The book opens with a series of funny stories about an incident in October 1918, on the eve of the so-called *őszirózsás forradalom* [Aster Revolution] in the aftermath

large farmers from the lowlands. In many places, the Association functioned as a reading group, but it also engaged in vociferous politicking.

²⁴ Nagyatádi Szabó, István (1863-1924) was a Hungarian politician, MP, party leader, and Minister of Agriculture (1919, 1920-1921, 1922-1924).

²⁵ UDVARVÖLGYI, Zsolt András. 'The first parliamentary appearance of national socialism in Hungary in 1932'. Manuscript. 2023. (Sent to the editors of the *Astra Salvensis*. Under editorial review.) pp. 2-5.

²⁶ For a complete biography of Zoltán Meskó, see: UDVARVÖLGYI, Zsolt András. 'Meskó Zoltán: egy politikusi pályakép. PhD-értekezés' [Zoltán Meskó: A carrier in politics. PhD dissertation]. Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2008. <https://doktori.hu/index.php?menuid=193&lang=HU&vid=1773>. Accessed 09. July 2015.

²⁷ Although I have written these stories in my doctoral dissertation, see UDVARVÖLGYI 2008, I have not yet published this part of my dissertation in Hungarian or English. My doctoral dissertation is only available in the Hungarian National Doctoral Council database.

²⁸ Rákosi, Jenő (1842 – 1929) was a Hungarian journalist, writer, theater director, editor and Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

²⁹ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). 'Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján' [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 5-6.

of World War I. By then, the Hungarian National Council had already been formed under the presidency of Count Mihály Károlyi³⁰ (24 October 1918) and the subsequent upheaval and tragedy had already cast its shadow. Everyone was waiting with bated breath to see what would be the outcome of the crucial audiences that took place in Gödöllő with King Charles IV (Charles I of Austria).³¹ Passions were fuelled by a glowing atmosphere in party circles. The news of Count János Hadik's³² designation as Prime Minister and his cabinet-forming talks also excited the diligent visitors to the then quiet "*Sas-kör*" [Eagle-Circle] party club. Ten to fifteen MPs met here every day, including the protagonist of the story, Zoltán Meskó, the conservative group of the old Independence Party that had not followed Albert Apponyi³³ into the Constitution Party of '48 and had become an independent party under the leadership of Ákos Bizony. For many months, this party has hardly taken an active part in political life and has been a mute spectator of political events. In the club, there was quiet discussion and joking, with only the younger members (including Meskó) occasionally bursting into action. From time to time, they would kindly encourage György Platthy³⁴, the party's Executive Chairman, but he would reassure them with the words: "It's all right, kids – we are lying well" (i.e., "doing fine").³⁵ Whenever a loud criticism was voiced, Platthy would reply with the well-known answer: "We are lying well!" On 30 October 1918, the restless felt that the time for action had come. The young deputies retreated to a corner for a semi-official party meeting, where presumably a decision was taken to enter negotiations to form a government. The decision was also communicated to the party's leadership of senior MPs. Platthy's response came as no surprise to anyone: "Take it easy, kids, the party is lying well!" The chairman then left their circle, and a few minutes later (presumably by telephone contact with Hadik) announced that the prime minister had asked the party delegation to come to him. Soon afterwards, the five-member negotiating delegation (Bizony, Platthy, Meskó, Endre Ráth³⁶ and Vilmos Eckhardt³⁷) was on its way to the Prime Minister's Office. Hadik made a gallant offer to the group of Bizony. He offered the Justice portfolio to the President of the Party, but Bizony nominated Executive President Platthy to Minister of Justice instead of himself,

³⁰ Count Károlyi, Mihály (1875 – 1955) was a Hungarian aristocrat, politician, MP, Prime Minister of Hungary (31 October 1918 – 11 January 1919), Provisional President of the People's Republic of Hungary (16 November 1918 – 11 January 1919) and President of the People's Republic of Hungary (11 January 1919 – 21 March 1919).

³¹ King Charles IV of Hungary (King Charles I of Austria) (1887 – 1922) was Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary (as Charles IV, Hungarian: IV. Károly), King of Croatia, King of Bohemia (as Charles III, Czech: Karel III.), and the last of the monarchs belonging to the House of Habsburg-Lorraine to rule over Austria-Hungary.

³² Count Hadik, János (1863 – 1933) was a Hungarian aristocrat, politician, MP, minister and he served for 17 hours as Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary, beginning on 30 October 1918.

³³ Count Apponyi, Albert (1846 – 1933) was a Hungarian aristocrat, politician, MP, party leader and Minister of Religion and Education of the Kingdom of Hungary (1906-1910, 1917 – 1918).

³⁴ Platthy, György (1864 – 1933) was a Hungarian lawyer, politician and MP.

³⁵ In Hungarian, this means someone in a good position.

³⁶ Ráth, Endre (1877 – 1929) was a Hungarian lawyer, journalist, politician and MP.

³⁷ Eckhardt, Vilmos (1889 – 1923) was a Hungarian landowner, politician and MP.

and Hadik asked Vilmos Eckhardt to take over the State Secretary of Finance too. The parties reached an agreement and the party delegation left with great satisfaction. They returned to the party circuit and were giving their report when they heard gunshots. When they went to the window, many rifle bullets were flying all around them as the Aster Revolution was taking place on the streets of Budapest. The deputies fell on their bellies with “military instinct”, but Meskó’s humour remained intact during the long flattening, and he broke the grave silence: “My president, my president, I always said you were right. For once, by God, we are lying well!”³⁸

The following anecdote also comes from the time of the party led by Ákos Bizony: From the point of view of national politics, the party’s life was rather uneventful. Executive Chairman Platthy was therefore able to take care of the “welfare” of party members, and the centre of gravity of his power soon shifted to this area. At that time, there was a great shortage of cigars, and MPs had great difficulty in providing for their cigar needs. The Party Circle was therefore left with the difficult task of procuring cigars, and as soon as they had access to new supplies, the MPs stormed their Executive Chairman. Platthy discharged his difficult and delicate duties with great tact and a strong sense of justice. But the MPs, led by the young, became increasingly demanding and devised a “strategic plan” to increase their cigar supplies. Zoltán Meskó, an off-duty captain and avid smoker, led the “operation”. They tried to sway Platthy from his position by demanding a new voting of Executive Chairman, in order to encourage him to show favouritism towards them. They kept asking when there would be an election of executive chairman. On a Sunday, a temporary “truce” was called. Meskó had some business in his constituency and went there. On the same day, King Charles IV, who happened to be in Budapest, received an agricultural deputation, including several deputies, at the royal palace. The next day Meskó returned from his constituency, and the deputies asked him in the club whether he had been to see the King. In his reply, Meskó produced the fact that he had appeared before the King in his captain’s field uniform, with all his decorations, and the King had a long talk with him. In reply to a question, he explained that he had last served in the 9th Division and was currently a member of the Independence and 48 Party. Asked about the party’s chairman, Meskó mentioned the name of György Platthy, and the King said: “Tell me, Mr. Meskó, and what kind of a man is Platthy?” Meskó replied: “Your Majesty, I humbly report that I cannot comment on this today. The cigar distribution will not take place until tomorrow.”³⁹

After the ordinary and charming stories, Meskó and the party of Ákos Bizony soon found themselves in the thick of politics. In January 1919, as the shift to the left in Mihály Károlyi’s politics began to take hold, the party circle on Mária Valéria Street was abuzz with the noisy arguments of the malcontents. Dezső

³⁸ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 7-11.

³⁹ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 83-86.

Ábrahám⁴⁰, Márton Lovászy⁴¹, and the pro-Károlyi party members who had recently joined the Károlyi party, Zoltán Meskó and Endre Ráth, were the most passionate. They led to deputations to Mihály Károlyi, but he went unstoppably down the fatal slope. On 25 January 1919, the club was in a real turmoil. The party meeting met in an explosive atmosphere, with Mihály Károlyi making an excited speech: "We are on a fast-moving train. I am the engineer of this train. Those who are afraid and cowardly to get on this speeding train, stay off." Zoltán Meskó interjected: "Mr. Count, speed is not the important thing, direction ('*Richtung*') is. If I want to go to Kecel, I will not take the Moscow express train." (With this comparison, Meskó was referring to the strengthening and imminent takeover of the Hungarian communists.) Shouts like this and similar ones were flying around. The air was hot all the time. Károlyi was voted down. Soon the electoral battle was on. The two former Bizony-supporters, Platthy and Meskó, were pitted against each other. Platthy "got on the train" of Károlyi, Meskó was left behind because of the "direction" ('*Richtung*'). When they met, Meskó asked Platthy with a joke, how he was doing with that speeding train. Platthy said, "If he said 'A' yet, he said 'B' too. The train is moving, and there is not much time to think. Or I stand in front of the train: that is no good, because the engine driver will run me over. So, I go up next to the engineer and throw the coal out of the locomotive so that the train stops." Meskó asked anxiously what would happen if the stoker was thrown out, but there was no delay in answering: "Just because I have bought a ticket", said the politician, "I do not have to go to the final destination." Later, on 21 March 1919, the communists took power, and the *Tanácsköztársaság* [Hungarian Soviet Republic] was proclaimed, and that decided all disputes. They only met once during the communist rule. Meskó broke the silence: "I told you that the direction ('*Richtung*') was important. The train was speeding along, only the direction turned round: the Moscow Express (i.e., the communists) was coming into Kecel."⁴²

The year 1919 gave little cause for jokes and banter. I did not find yet such anecdotal sources about Meskó's activities in Szeged during the Hungarian Soviet Republic, his contacts with Miklós Horthy, or his role in the organisation of the "national army". The series of stories continues in 1920, when Meskó was already a front-line politician, a state secretary, and then became an influential leader of the Smallholders' Party, first as its main organiser and then as its Executive Chairman. Numerous anecdotes and stories related to him help to understand the national and local political life of the period.

⁴⁰ Pattantyús-Ábrahám, Dezső (1875 – 1973) was a Hungarian lawyer, politician, MP, State Secretary of Justice and Interior and he served as Prime Minister and temporary Minister of Finance of the second counter-revolutionary government in Szeged (12 July 1919 – 12 August 1919).

⁴¹ Lovászy, Márton (1864 – 1927) was a Hungarian politician, author, editor, journalist, Minister of Religion and Education of Hungary (31 October 1918 – 22 December 1918) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary (15 August 1919 – 11 September 1919).

⁴² VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). 'Meskó Zoltán vidám történetei. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján' [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 28-29.

Meskó was also “in good shape” within the walls of the Parliament. As an experienced Member of Parliament, an excellent debater, he was unbeatable if anything could be made a joke of. When, in the early twenties, Social Democrat MP Sándor Propper⁴³ was pressing Minister of the Interior Iván Rakovszky⁴⁴, Meskó shouted to the Minister: “Will you take responsibility?... Like the fire chief of Daróc?” Later, in the corridor, the bewildered and perplexed MPs and journalists were able to learn the story of the fire chief of Daróc: It was in one of the war years that, in the House of Representatives, in the peak of heated events and fierce attacks, this self-honest phrase “I take responsibility!” was often uttered. The courageous words reached the ears of János Marcsák, a worthy bootmaker master and fire chief, in the village of Daróc. He was impressed by the masculine eloquence and was very impressed by this character. It was an old tradition in the village to hold a firemen’s ball every June in honour of the village population and the fire brigade. The only other “tradition” more faithfully preserved by the people of the village was the fire that broke out in the village on the night of each firemen’s ball. And so, it was in the summer of 1917. Master Marcsák returned home late at night, tired from the celebrations, and his wife treated him to her favourite food, plum dumplings. He had already eaten his sixth when the footman from the neighbouring workshop ran up and told him that the house next door was on fire. Master Marcsák did not look up, but “went on with his work, and so there were two dumplings less again, and two seeds more.” The next time he was called (“The whole street is on fire!”), he did not even flinch. Finally, when the footman boy was crying outside the window (“The whole village is on fire!”), he turned around, having spat out the last seed, and with an unassailable sense of self, shouted to him: “Burn or not burn...I take responsibility!”⁴⁵

The following story is linked to a campaign tour. A large delegation of Hungarians from Mezőcsát visited the Esterházy Street clubroom just before the parliamentary elections. The supporters of the district’s candidate, József Bottlik⁴⁶, came up and asked the leaders of the Smallholders’ Party to come to the district and help them win. Zoltán Meskó, the head of the committee, was specially invited. Meskó agreed, but with one stipulation, “he did not want to see any more *bürgesaprikás* [mutton stew].” Instead, he asked for chicken paprikash with lots of sour cream. The next morning, the leaders, Gyula Rubinek⁴⁷, István Szabó Nagyatádi, János Mayer⁴⁸, Meskó and Bottlik were in Mezőcsát. They held

⁴³ Propper, Sándor (1877 – 1956) was a Hungarian politician, journalist, editor and MP.

⁴⁴ Rakovszky, Iván (1885 – 1960) was a Hungarian lawyer, politician, MP, Minister of Interior (1922 – 1926) and Minister of Religion and Education (29 August 1944 – 16 October 1944).

⁴⁵ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám történetei. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁶ Bottlik, József (1874 – 1933) was a Hungarian lawyer, politician, MP and county government commissioner (“főispán”) of Borsod county (1917).

⁴⁷ Rubinek, Gyula (1865 – 1922) was a Hungarian agricultural expert, author, politician, MP, Minister of Agriculture (27 August 1919 – 15 August 1920) and Minister of Trade (19 July 1920 – 16 December 1920).

⁴⁸ Mayer, János (1871 – 1955) was a Hungarian smallholder, politician, MP and Minister of Agriculture (1921-1922, 1924 – 1931).

a meeting of the people, followed by lunch and snacks, but Meskó was already preparing for the big evening feast and had hardly eaten. At the supper, too, he made a splendid speech, while the others enjoyed a hearty meal of *bürgerpaprikás*. He told anecdotes, the people had a great time, and he was in tears from hunger. At 10 o'clock in the evening, he spoke provocatively about women's suffrage⁴⁹: "Women should not have the vote. Women should not go to people's meetings to make speeches. A woman should be a good landlady, she should see to it that she cooks good chicken paprikash for her husband." As soon as he said the last word, a huge portion of chicken paprikash with lots of sour cream was placed in front of him. Meskó "pounced with gusto on the superbly prepared dish." But he soon discovered that the paprikash was inedibly tough, so much so that he had to end up with *bürgerpaprikás* to satisfy his hunger. Four days later, Meskó received a letter from Mezőcsát. The party president apologised for the incident through pages, because "the women, under the influence of the jokes of the MP, forgot everything, including the kitchen and chicken paprikash, and were certainly late in putting the chicken on the stove ('sparherd')." Meskó replied laconically by telegram: "That is why women should not have the right to vote", wrote the hapless MP.⁵⁰

Meskó's "bon mots" were always apt. It happened in the early twenties that Meskó was on his way home by train, and in the first compartment he found good company: the Minister of Justice Pál Pesthy⁵¹ was travelling to his farm in Tolna County, and the Minister of Agriculture István Nagyatádi Szabó was also on his way to his home in Erdőcsokonya. Meskó greeted the ministers with great respect and remarked that "he had never thought that they had made so much progress in consolidation." To Nagyatádi's puzzlement, he replied that in his view "it is an infallible sign of consolidation⁵² if two ministers dare to travel at the same time, and are not afraid that while they are there, someone will sit in their velvet chairs." After this wisecrack, Meskó, continuing the story, asked Nagyatádi why he had not gone so far under Friedrich, and then, turning to Pesthy, declared that "those were the hard times when Vilmos Pál Tomcsányi⁵³ was the Minister of

⁴⁹ On 25 and 26 January 1920, elections for deputies took place in most of the territory of Trianon Hungary under the electoral decree of the Friedrich government. The elections were secret and for the first time, women were able to vote in real, multi-party elections. Women's suffrage was not supported by many politicians and MPs at the time.

⁵⁰ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). 'Meskó Zoltán vidám történetei. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján' [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 25-27.

⁵¹ Pesthy, Pál (1873 – 1952) was a Hungarian lawyer, curial judge, MP and Minister of Justice (1924 – 1929).

⁵² After the fall of communist Soviet Republic, Hungary went through a period of turmoil, including Romanian occupation. Order and lawful rule were restored only with great difficulty from July 1920, from the first premiership of Pál Teleki, but real consolidation could only be seen from the beginning of István Bethlen's premiership, on 14 April 1921.

⁵³ Tomcsányi, Vilmos Pál (1880 – 1959) was a Hungarian lawyer, professor, landowner, MP, Minister of Justice (1920 – 1922) and Minister of Interior (19 February 1921 – 14 April 1921).

Justice, and he, though only a humble state secretary, would not have gone for the world, not even to Cinkota⁵⁴.⁵⁵

On May 21, 1921, under the slogan “Up to Buda!”, one hundred thousand Hungarians from all parts of the country set out for the capital. On the “Vérmező”, a large park in the Buda part of the capital, 100,000 smallholders and farmers marched to demonstrate for peace in the village and the capital after two years of revolutions and bloodsheds. The leaders of the smallholders, Gyula Rubinek, István Szabó Nagyatádi, Pál Meskó, Zoltán Meskó were the main organizers. “The unspoiled countryside forgives the guilty Budapest”⁵⁶ – this was the motto of the speakers’ speeches, and then Mayor of Budapest Jenő Sipőcz⁵⁷ and Péter B. Szűcs, smallholder of Makó, sealed the peace with a solemn handshake. After the celebrations, the participants from the countryside headed to the railway station, where the special trains were ready to depart. Meskó, as the chief organiser, personally escorted the crowd to the station. When he arrived on the platform, he found himself confronted by a boiling crowd. At first, he naively thought he was encountering the aftermath of the morning’s events, but later it turned out that the people were more outraged and disappointed. He soon found out why, when a “fat Hungarian from Ráckeve” thundered at him, “They brought me up to reconcile, and they stole my wallet on the tram!”⁵⁸

The following anecdote can be linked to the closing event of the large-scale demonstration on 21 May 1921 too, when leaders and organisers gathered for a final toast. Count István Bethlen⁵⁹, Rubinek and Nagyatádi also addressed the participants. Finally, Bethlen called to the tired Meskó, “Let us hear something cheerful!” At the request of the Prime Minister, Meskó told his audience the following story: He started with an apt question about the population of “*Csonka-Magyarország*” [“Mutilated Hungary” after the Treaty of Trianon]. The guesses came in a nice line (seven million, eight and a half million, etc.), but Meskó quickly settled the debate and gave his own calculation, as he “often travels around the country and knows all the censuses.” The latest figures are as follows: István Friedrich spoke on behalf of five million people in Transdanubia, István Haller⁶⁰ has three million people behind him, Rubinek and Nagyatádi rightly said today

⁵⁴ It was a village very close to Budapest at that time.

⁵⁵ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 124-125.

⁵⁶ This slogan refers to Miklós Horthy’s speech on his arrival in Budapest on 16 November 1919, in which he called Budapest a guilty city for the Communist reign of terror, but stated that they were ready to forgive and join hands with brothers.

⁵⁷ Sipőcz, Jenő (1878 – 1937) was a Hungarian lawyer and mayor of Budapest (1920 – 1934).

⁵⁸ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám históriái. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 59-60.

⁵⁹ Count Bethlen, István (1874 – 1946) was a Hungarian aristocrat, politician, MP, party leader, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary between 1921 – 1931.

⁶⁰ Haller, István (1880 – 1964) was a Hungarian journalist, politician, MP and Minister of Religion and Education (1919 – 1920).

that “we have our five million people”. He heard Győző Drozdy⁶¹ say last week that “four million people are behind his policies, and there are more four million people can be attributed to the other parties, groups and factions, and that two and a half million people – narrowly measured – are behind his own modest person, and that is how the result will be: The population of “Csonka-Magyarország” is twenty-three and a half million.” Meskó continued, stating that although “the Prime Minister knows everything, he has only just been informed of it on these numbers.” With that, Meskó sat down, but the smallholders continued to discuss the mysterious figures at length.⁶²

Pál Teleki's⁶³ brief premiership (19 July 1920 - 14 April 1921) was followed by the successful, ambitious ten-year government of István Bethlen (14 April 1921 - 24 August 1931). This period is known in the history of Hungary as the “Bethlen Consolidation”. Meskó, who gradually marginalised and became irrelevant, initially maintained good relations with both aristocratic prime ministers. The following story also relates to Bethlen. When Zoltán Meskó and his associates formed the opposition Smallholders' Party, they put a great deal of effort into organising the countryside. Every week, they made a trip to a few villages and worked hard on the “smallholder rocks”. On one Sunday, they achieved outstanding success in Zala County. The next day, the opposition smallholders walked the corridors of the Parliament with a serene face, and Meskó proudly told Bálint Szijj⁶⁴, smallholder leader of the governing party that they would have to provide “replacement rocks” because the ones in Zala County were cracking. Bethlen noticed the commotion across the corridor, and jokingly threatened Meskó, telling him to be careful about agitation of the village people. In reply, Meskó made it clear that they were doing nothing more than what they had been doing at the front, namely they built the second line. “The first front was still solid on the battlefield when the second line was ready for battle.” Meskó continued fiercely, stating that the Prime Minister was still “holding the first line taut”, but there was no telling when a flood might come, flow through, break through the line, and – if there was no dam to hold it back – the flood would wash everything away, and not even stop until the “socialist dam”. That is why they are building the second barrier. Bethlen soon interjected: “That would be all right, but the mistake, big prankster, is that you are carrying the sand from my embankment.”⁶⁵

Of course, in addition to the above-mentioned “funny stories”, Meskó also had some harder, more serious speeches and interjections, but in this study, I

⁶¹ Drozdy, Győző (1885 – 1970) was a Hungarian teacher, journalist, politician and MP.

⁶² VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám történetei. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 99-101.

⁶³ Count Teleki, Pál (1879 – 1941) was a Hungarian aristocrat, geographer, scholar, professor, Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs (19 April 1920 – 19 July 1920) Minister of Religion and Education (1938 – 1939) and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary (1920 – 1921, 1939 – 1941).

⁶⁴ Szijj, Bálint (1868 – 1945) was a Hungarian smallholder, politician, party leader and MP.

⁶⁵ VIDOR, Gyula. (comp.). ‘Meskó Zoltán vidám történetei. Elmondja a t. Ház folyosóján’ [Funny Stories of Zoltán Meskó. Told in the Corridor of the Honoured House]. Budapest: Légrády Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T, 1925, pp. 118-120.

focused on the humorous side of the politician. In the 1930s, the MP had already turned to a more radical, far-right direction, as I alluded to in my introduction. His anti-Semitic, anti-socialist, irredentist and demagogic views were repeated in his speeches and interventions. His loud, theatrical style was coupled with incoherent, extremist messages. But to outline the era of the 1930s, and Meskó's later, astonishing, controversial career and fate, would be beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusion

It is an undoubted fact that Zoltán Meskó brought a new, unique colour to Parliament from 1917. With his irresistible urge to speak, his vitality, agility, his witty style, and with his extremely sharp tongue, he easily became the centre of attention. Many of his fellow Members liked him, but even more condemned and despised him, considered him a buffoon. From the early 1930s, especially with the formation of his National Socialist Hungarian Agricultural Labourers' and Workers' Party in 1932, he gradually became marginalised in domestic politics and his humorous side faded. He was defeated in the 1935 elections and did not win a seat, but in 1939, after reorganising his party, he was re-elected as a Member of Parliament. By then, however, the Hungarian far-right was dominated by the Arrow-Cross Party-Hungarist Movement led by Ferenc Szálasi⁶⁶ and Kálmán Hubay⁶⁷. And this is no longer the era of the humorous, jovial Meskó. By 1944, Meskó's personality and attitude had changed from his previous one, and during the siege of Budapest he and his family hid Jews and helped the persecuted. But in 1945, the Budapest People's Court sentenced him to five years in prison for war crimes, and later to life imprisonment by the National Council of the People's Court. He was released from prison during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, but was arrested again in 1957. According to family legend, he was imprisoned in a cell block in Vác with János Kádár⁶⁸, so the family appealed to the Kádár secretariat for the release of the elderly, very ill Meskó. In 1959, 10 days before his death, he was released from prison and died a free man in Nagybaracska on 10 June 1959.⁶⁹

I have sketched the humorous phase of a tragicomic political career that once saw "better days". In this paper, I described a man whose funny stories were published in a book during his lifetime. Moreover, I consider the book significant in the literature of Hungarian political humour because it was a good example of a cheerful outlook on life, of the beneficial, tension-relieving effects of laughter at

⁶⁶ Szálasi, Ferenc (1897 – 1946) military officer, politician, MP, leader of the Arrow Cross Party-Hungarist Movement, 'Leader of the Nation' (1944 – 1945) (both head of state and prime minister of the Kingdom of Hungary).

⁶⁷ Hubay, Kálmán (1902 – 1946) journalist, Arrow Cross politician. Until the release of Ferenc Szálasi in 1940, he was the leader of the Arrow Cross Party and leader of its parliamentary group.

⁶⁸ Kádár, János (1912 – 1989) communist politician, MP, Minister of the Interior (1948 – 1950), First Secretary (later: General Secretary) of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (1956 – 1985), Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Hungary (1956 – 1958, 1961 – 1965).

⁶⁹ UDVARVÖLGYI 2008, pp. 89-93, 101-102.

a time when Hungary was suffering from serious crises. After the blood sacrifices of the defeated First World War, the economic collapse, the social catastrophe, the internal political tensions, the controversy of the 1918 revolution, the red terror of the communist coup in 1919, came the Romanian occupation of the country, anarchy, then the slow and bloody period of the reconstruction under Miklós Horthy, the unjust Trianon peace treaty of 4 June 1920, and finally, followed by the consolidation of István Bethlen. Between all these tragedies and misfortunes, there was little reason for jokes and anecdotes in Hungary. Yet Meskó tried it many times and this often had a beneficial effect on his fellow politicians, even his opponents.

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