HSR

Hungarian Studies Review

Vol. X, Nos. 1 and 2 (1983)

Special Volume

HUNGARY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

PART I: *The Road to War*

S.B. Vardy, Eva S. Balogh, Thomas Sakmyster, Francis S. Wagner and N.F. Dreisziger discuss the long-term and immediate origins of Hungary's involvement in World War II.

PART II: *The Search for Peace*

Istvan I. Mocsy, Leslie Laszlo, Mario D. Fenyo and Janos Horvath write on the themes of opposition to collaboration and the search for a way to end the war.

Introductory essays by N.F. Dreisziger. Comments on the war-time diaries of Cardinal Seredi by Leslie Laszlo. Book reviews by T.L. Sakmyster and S. Antal. Photographs.

Hungarian Studies Review

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Special Volume:

HUNGARY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

N.F. Dreisziger
Editor

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Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. X, Nos. 1 and 2 (1983)

Preface

The Second World War is undoubtedly one of the most controversial episodes of Hungarian history. The war had a profound impact on every aspect of Hungary's development. Its long-term consequences are still being felt today, and are likely to be felt for generations to come. Future historians of Hungary will no doubt regard the war as a major turning point in that country's evolution.

Mainly because of the war's momentous consequences, its discussion still invokes high emotions among Hungarians, scholars and laymen alike. Not surprisingly, opinions differ on virtually every aspect of Hungary's entry into, and role in the war. The divergence of views is only widened as a result of concerted and persistent efforts by certain politically-motivated groups to disseminate false or at least ideologically tinted interpretations regarding many incidents of Hungary's wartime history. Although nearly four decades have passed since the war's conclusion, historians seeking the truth still have to grapple with polemics, deeply felt prejudices, and continued efforts by some to obstruct Clio's progress.

Undaunted by these obstacles, a few historians continue to search and analyze Hungary's wartime evolution. Over the past few years, our journal has collected samples of their works and we have decided to fill the 1983 issues with these. We have divided them into two groups. The first deal almost exclusively with the origins of Hungary's involvement in the war; the second, mainly with the themes of opposition to the German war effort and the search for ways and means of dissociating Hungary from it. A few papers, also touching on Hungary's wartime history but not dealing directly with the themes mentioned above, will be printed in the 1984 regular issues of our journal. Occasional references to these papers will be made in the introduction and the footnotes to this volume.

While nearly all aspects of Hungary's history on the eve of and during World War II are controversial, the themes featured in this volume are especially so. In fact, some of them are virtually taboo in Hungary, while others have similar status in certain

Hungarian émigré circles. Our aim in presenting studies dealing with such themes is not to exacerbate the existing historical acrimony, but to promote a knowledge and understanding of some of the least-known and least-understood aspects of Hungary's history. We do not wish to promote or endorse a certain interpretation, or a set of interpretations. In fact, our readers will notice that the authors of this volume themselves do not agree on certain issues. As always in the case of our journal—or any other genuine scholarly periodical in the West—the authors' opinions are strictly their own, and are not necessarily shared by anyone else associated with us.

The continued publication of our journal, and the production of special volumes such as this one, is made possible only through the support and dedicated work of a number of institutions and individuals. For a few years now, the University of Toronto has, through its Hungarian studies programme, supported the *Review* by providing help, editorial facilities, and even the occasional subsidy. Various facilities available at the Royal Military College of Canada were used by the undersigned in the editing process. The National Archives of the United States, in response to our requests made many years ago, released a collection of pictures to us concerning the Kassa bombing. A team of authors patiently cooperated in the editing process. Some of them waited for the publication of their papers for a period that was longer than is the case with many other periodicals. Many scholars, too numerous to mention, helped in the revising of the manuscripts in their capacity as readers.

N.F.D.

Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. X, No. 1 (Spring 1983)

Part I
The Road to War

Introduction

National calamities of vast proportions are not unusual in Hungary's history. The Tatar conquest, the Turkish wars, the struggles against the Hapsburgs had all caused innumerable casualties and large-scale devastation. Both in terms of its immediate impact and long-term consequences, the Second World War was still another of these great calamities for Hungary. Military losses were huge. In January and February of 1943 for example, over 100,000 Hungarian servicemen were lost—killed, missing or captured—when the Second Hungarian Army was destroyed in the massive Soviet breakthrough on the Don River.[1] Hungary's civilian casualties, incurred mainly during the final phases of the war, are estimated to have been just as severe while about half a million people—mainly Jews—perished in German concentration camps.[2] A similar number of people were lost by Hungary as a result of the exodus of refugees that took place at the end of the war.

Physical destruction was also very severe. Allied bombers and Russian artillery left many of Hungary's cities in ruins. As they retreated, the Germans stripped the country of resources and equipment—including some 500 factories—and destroyed what could not be removed: bridges, power stations and whatever else could be of use to the enemy. War damage and German removals are said to have amounted to 40 percent of Hungary's national wealth at its 1944 level.[3]

As if these losses were not enough, the country continued to suffer as a result of Soviet occupation. The initial looting by the rank-and-file was followed by the organized confiscation of Hungary's wealth and resources by the occupying military authorities. A large part of what was left of the country's industry was put under Soviet military management and was forced to produce mainly for the occupying power. Additional wealth was extracted from the country under the label of reparation

payments owed to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Not surprisingly, Hungary's economy soon reached a state of near-total collapse: by the end of 1945 the rate of inflation amounted to 15 percent per hour.

One of the most obvious long-term consequences of the war for Hungary had been the re-establishment of the territorial arrangement in East Central Europe which had been proclaimed by the Treaty of Trianon of 1920. This meant that the lands that had been returned to Hungary between 1938 and 1941 were once again assigned to the country's neighbours. Millions of Hungarians were placed under foreign rule again, rule inspired in some cases by a heightened spirit of revenge. Czechoslovakia, in particular, embarked on a campaign of repression against her Hungarian citizens.[5] What happened to that country's Magyar residents in the wake of the war was just an indication of the fate that could await unprotected minorities in East Central Europe in the postwar era.[6]

The most important consequence of World War II for Hungary was the transformation of the country into a client state of Soviet Russia. This was a fundamental geopolitical change. Having been part of the eastern protective frontier of Western Europe for centuries, Hungary became part of the western defensive perimeter of the new colossus of the East. This strategic transformation was accompanied by equally dramatic changes in the country's internal affairs. In forging a "socialist society" in Hungary, the Soviet Union, through its Hungarian communist allies, systematically destroyed many centuries-old institutions and replaced them with ones that had few if any roots in Hungarian history. The Churches, the press, the universities, the professions, etc., were subjected to strict state control. At the same time, established Hungarian traditions such as a multi-party system and a vibrant intellectual life were stifled under the forcibly imposed straightjacket of Marxist-Leninist dogma. More important still, for many years persistent efforts were made to isolate Hungary from Western ideas and influences and thereby to severe her centuries-old links with Central and Western Europe.[7]

Naturally, this view of the Second World War's impact on Hungary is not shared in its entirety in communist countries. There, Hungary's socialist transformation is proclaimed to have been a beneficial development. Accordingly, the Soviet

occupation in 1945 is portrayed as a "liberation" rather than still another of those national calamities that befell Hungary from time to time in her long and troubled history. That the war itself was a great tragedy for the Hungarian nation, is of course commonly accepted by communist commentators and historians as well.

The responsibility of the Hungarian people, and especially, of Hungary's leaders, in bringing about their country's participation in World War II, this most tragic episode of modern history, has attracted the attention of many historians inside and outside of the frontiers of Hungary. It is generally admitted that throughout the years leading to Hungary's entry into the war—and even after it—two sets of factors existed which determined Hungary's involvement — or continued participation — in the conflict. One set of factors were beyond the power of anyone in Hungary to influence, while the other consisted of those that the Hungarian nation, or at least its leadership, should have been able to control. Where historians disagree is in determining which factor belonged to which of these two basic categories. To put it another way, some historians feel that Hungary and her leaders could do very little to influence the circumstances that led to the country's tragedy while others believe that a part of Hungarian society, in particular the political and military elite, was, through acts of omission or commission, primarily responsible for the fate that befell the nation. [8]

The factors that are commonly considered to have caused, or at least contributed to, Hungary's involvement in World War II can be characterized as being either primarily external in nature, or predominantly internal. Into the former category belong such historical circumstances as the international organization of East Central Europe at the time: the division of this region into hardly viable, small nation states. Other such factors were the existence of international rivalries, massive irredentas, economic underdevelopment, in this zone of tension wedged between Germany and Russia. Many of these problems have been ascribed to the inadequacy of the order that had been devised for East Central Europe by the peacemakers after World War I, but it is evident that some serious problems would have existed in this region even if a wiser and more just peace settlement had been imposed in 1919-1920.

Among the "internal" factors making for Hungary's involvement in the war the first that has to be mentioned is probably the universal resentment felt by Hungarians for the post-World War I peace settlement. This feeling united Hungarians in a way they had never been united before, at least not for a long period of time in their history. The political atmosphere and realities this sentiment created in Hungary were probably the most potent factors shaping the country's foreign policies in the period under consideration in this volume. But revisionism, as the politics of seeking a change in the peace settlement was known in Hungary, need not have led to an outright military alliance with Germany; thus it is revisionism by other than peaceful means that can be more appropriately labelled as a factor making for involvement in the war. Other internal factors were divisions within Hungarian society, often precisely over this question of peaceful vs. non-peaceful revision. One of the most important of these divisions was the rift between Hungary's military and civilian leadership.

The milestones of Hungary's descent to the status of a Nazi German satellite are familiar to most students of Hungarian history. Some of them are discussed in fair amount of detail by the authors in this volume. Nevertheless, it may be useful to review them briefly. It can be argued that the process really began in 1938. This is not to dismiss the numerous factors—international, economic and ideological—which made for Hungarian-German collaboration before that year but there was no hard evidence until then that Hungary could be made a tool of German ambitions. In this respect Hitler's occupation of Austria was an ominous development. It made Hungary contiguous with the Third Reich. In the realm of international relations, it proved the supremacy of German influence in Central Europe. Italy, which had opposed *Anschluss* in the past, abdicated its position as a major power in the region. Internally the Austrian *Anschluss* strengthened those elements of Hungarian society which favoured closer cooperation with Germany: the increasingly radicalized ethnic German community, and the pro-Nazi parties within Hungary's body politic.

An even more important development in 1938 was the Munich crisis. This was one of those events in diplomatic history in which there were far fewer winners than losers, one which disappointed almost everyone, excepting those misguided people who really

believed that the agreement assured "peace in our time." It is perhaps a little known fact that the man who was probably most disappointed by the settlement was Hitler himself. The records of German-Hungarian discussions at the time strongly suggest that Hitler's real aim was not a negotiated settlement, [9] but a limited, victorious war which would disprove and therefore silence those in his entourage who kept cautioning him about probable great-power intervention on behalf of the small countries of East Central Europe. A "diplomatic solution" of the Sudeten issue deprived Hitler of a good excuse to attack Czechoslovakia. Of course, he made the best of his "triumph" over the British, French and the Czechs, and further consolidated the Reich's diplomatic ascendancy in Central Europe.

The country that lost most at Munich—aside from Czechoslovakia—was Hungary. Only a few months earlier that country stood on a proud plateau of its interwar diplomatic history. It had reached an agreement, the so-called Bled accords, with its Little Entente neighbours. At the same time it was being offered a military alliance by the Third Reich, the region's only great power. But the German offer was rejected and within several weeks Hungary's international position took a dramatic turn for the worse. In the Munich agreement, Germany's and even Poland's claims against Czechoslovakia were satisfied, but not Hungary's. This was a bitter pill to swallow for the country that probably had the most justified claims against Czechoslovakia. In the end, Hungary's case was considered, and some territory was returned to her through the First Vienna Award, but it was amply evident that all this was partly a handout from Hitler, a favour granted by a great power to a small one. Later it became increasingly obvious—as Dr. Wagner points out in his paper—that Hungary's continued enjoyment of that favour was conditional on good behaviour. The German leaders would never forget—and would from time to time remind the Hungarians—that when Germany had wanted Hungary's military cooperation, it was not offered. It is not an exaggeration to conclude that Munich marked the beginning of the end of a truly independent Hungarian foreign policy, one which had been promulgated to a large extent on the mistaken premise that the Western democracies, especially Britain, could and would exert an influence in the affairs of East Central Europe. It is not surprising that in the wake of Munich, Kálmán Kánya, the

architect of this independent foreign policy, had to leave office.[10]

Despite the setbacks Hungarian diplomacy suffered in the fall of 1938, throughout 1939 a semblance of independence was maintained by Hungary—so much so that when in March of that year Hungarian forces re-occupied Subcarpathia, the impression was maintained in Budapest that the move was made on Hungary's initiative in disregard of Hitler's wishes. In reality, the occupation was secretly though reluctantly consented to by the Germans and constituted still another of those handouts by the Germans for which Hungary's leaders were expected to be eternally grateful.

It was through this process of peacemeal and on the whole peaceful revision that Hungary, slowly and almost imperceptably, drifted into the Axis orbit. The next milestone along this road—as Dr. Balogh explains in her study—was the crisis that culminated in the Second Vienna Award and the most damaging one, was Hungary's involvement in the Yugoslav campaign. That crisis, also linked to the issue of territorial revision, cost the country much of its reputation as well a Prime Minister Pál Teleki's life—through suicide. It also set the stage for the final and irrevocable involvement in the war less than three months later.

It might be asked at this point whether it would have been possible for Hungary's statesmen to halt this process of increasingly closer association with Germany. The answer to this question probably has to be negative. First of all, few people at the time thought that this friendship would lead to serious and undesirable consequences, including the loss of the country's independence. Secondly, the success of the policy of treaty revision was predicated on German support and treaty revision could not be abandoned. As Professor Vardy points out in his paper, the desire for reunion with Hungarians beyond the borders of Trianon Hungary was a national obsession in interwar Hungarian society. It would be safe to say that no Hungarian government that failed to espouse revisionism had a chance to survive. Each and every Hungarian leader was expected to seek a remedy for the country's tragedy: a peace settlement which had left the nation "mortally wounded." Few in the country could imagine that what appeared to be the only cure for this state of affairs—revision in collaboration with Germany—could turn out

to be worse than the disease. Moreover, before the days of impending German domination of East Central Europe, Hungary's governments had sought to foster revisionist sentiments in their country. When the German danger became acute, revisionism became dangerous, but it could not be stopped as national public opinion could not be turned around. In a sense then, on the eve of war, the Horthy regime became the victim of its own propaganda. In this sense, the tragedy of Hungary's interwar leadership was of its own making.

Although by June of 1941 the process of Hungary's transformation into a German client state was well advanced, especially in matters pertaining to international relations, the abandonment of the last pretence of neutrality did not come about easily. As some of the authors point out in this volume, Hungary's leaders entered the war reluctantly, and only in the midst of great tension and confusion. Even after the start of the German-Russian war, they tried to prolong their country's neutrality but abandoned their efforts as a result of a series of extraordinary developments, culminating in an air-raid against targets in north-eastern Hungary, not very far from the Soviet border.

This raid, particularly the bombing of the city of Kassa (Košice), constitutes the immediate cause — or excuse as some historians would say — of Hungary's final involvement in the war. Although a largely unexplained event which is still the object of controversy particularly in the West, there are a few facts that can be told about it with some degree of certainty. The attacks took place in broad daylight, in the early afternoon of the 26th of June, 1941. Near the town of Rahó, right on the Russian border, a passenger train was attacked. Some sources talk of an attack on Munkács, a larger town at some distance from the frontier. Substantial damage was done only in the provincial centre of Kassa, about one hundred kilometers further west, very near the Slovak border of 1941. In fact Kassa had been one of the cities returned to Hungary by the Vienna Award of 1938. There, some thirty bombs were dropped, causing loss of life and considerable destruction. The planes, according to the vast majority of reports, were twin-engined monoplanes, and they had approached the city from the southeast and departed in the same direction. Reports on their markings are contradictory. The bombs they dropped were 100 kilo bombs. An unexploded bomb was dug out and photographed. The pictures show a bomb with

Russian inscriptions. The raids were reported to military headquarters in Budapest as unprovoked Russian attacks, and the Hungarian government decided to declare the existence of a state of war between Hungary and the Soviet Union as a result. That decision constituted the last milestone on the road that led to Hungary's involvement in the Second World War.

Two papers in this special volume of *HSR* examine the long term origins of Hungary's involvement in the war. Two others deal with the background of the incident that was the immediate cause, while the last study is devoted to the events of June 26, 1941 alone, as well as the historiographical mysteries that surround it. The question of revisionism as a national phenomenon in interwar Hungary is examined in the first of the papers dealing with the long-term origins of Hungary's involvement in the war. In his study, Professor Vardy surveys the birth and evolution of the "Trianon syndrome" in Hungarian society. He analyzes the impact that the dismemberment of the country by the peacemakers had on the national psyche, and particularly on a very influential intellectual, historian Gyula Szekfű. Vardy points out that the lesson Szekfű and many of his followers drew from the First World War and its troubled aftermath was that Hungary's tragedy came at the moment she became dissociated from Germanic Central Europe. The implications of such teachings were momentous. There can be little doubt that many of Szekfű's readers concluded that Hungary's tragedy could be reversed only if she regained her historic association with the German world.

While Professor Vardy examines the impact of an act of international politics on national attitudes and consciousness, Dr. Balogh describes how the latter eventually expressed themselves in the conduct of Hungary's foreign relations. Peaceful revision, she points out, became possible only when the post-World War I order began disintegrating in East Central Europe. Even then, it was a very difficult proposition, as Hungary's leaders had to exploit opportunities created by the German assault on the Versailles system without bringing disaster upon their country, such as involvement in war, the impairment of national independence, or the loss of the goodwill of the great powers. For some time, and to some extent, the Hungarian leadership was successful in this difficult undertaking, but then its luck ran out. Dr. Balogh argues that by 1940 the Hungarian policies of

peaceful revision had become counterproductive. In particular, the diplomatic manoeuverings that led to the Second Vienna Award alienated great power opinion and accelerated the process of Hungary's satellitization.[11]

Dr. Balogh's paper on diplomatic history is followed by one touching on the subject of civil-military relations in the same period. While Dr. Balogh explored the contribution made by Hungary's diplomats to their country's drift toward war, Professor Sakmyster examines the similar efforts of some soldiers. He does this with special reference to the final act of this drama, the Kassa bombing and the declaration of war on the U.S.S.R. His paper then, is both a study of the long-term origins of Hungary's entry into the war, and an examination of the historical roots of the immediate cause of involvement. The story he tells differs from the one related by Dr. Balogh. Hungary's diplomats allowed their country to drift towards disaster to a degree—perhaps a large degree—unwittingly, while the soldiers Dr. Sakmyster talks about deliberately sought their country's entry into the war on Germany's side. His argument is that the Kassa bombing was probably a plot hatched by two or perhaps more Hungarian officers stationed in Berlin, and carried out by the German secret service (the *Abwehr*). All this seems to have been done behind the backs of these men's military superiors, and certainly without the knowledge of Hungary's civilian leaders.

A very different explanation is given about the Kassa bombing's historical origins by Dr. Wagner. He also believes that the incident was the consequence of a conspiracy, but he argues that it was prepared and carried out entirely by the Germans, probably in retaliation for the reluctance Hungary's civilian leaders had shown in the past when Germany had asked favours of them, especially proofs of solidarity with German military ventures. At the end of his paper Dr. Wagner reveals information he had obtained during and after the war (much of it while he had served in Hungary's diplomatic service) suggesting that the Kassa raid had been carried out by German agents operating from Slovakia.

The last paper deals with the Kassa incident itself, as well as the theories that have been advanced about it since 1941. Unlike the studies by Drs. Sakmyster and Wagner, it argues that there are reasons for doubting the conspiracy hypothesis. It also puts forth a possible explanation why the belief that the bombing had

been a plot gained almost universal currency among Hungarians both in emigration and in Hungary. The Kassa raid may or may not have been the result of a plot, the paper concludes, but there certainly seem to have been plots to make us believe that it was.

Differences among the five studies in this volume are obvious. They are written from different perspectives, with different emphases, and often with widely differing underlying assumptions. The latter is especially evident in the three papers touching on the immediate origins of Hungary's involvement in the war. Their authors, while not claiming to know all the mysteries of the Kassa raid, incline toward endorsing three very different explanations. Despite these differences, a common theme does appear to run throuh all five of these studies. They all describe an aspect or part of a great human tragedy. Professor Vardy explains how a great national calamity—the Treaty of Trianon—generated something akin to a collective political neurosis in Hungary. Dr. Balogh describes how the country's leaders, afflicted with an obsession about treaty revision, drifted closer and closer to the German orbit despite their beliefs in national honour and independence. Professor Sakmyster cites the examples of officers who, in their zeal to "right the wrongs of history," conspired to drag their country into the war in disregard of the wishes of both government and people. And Dr. Wagner's paper points out that the Germans possessed ample means of forcing Hungary to cooperate with them whether she wanted to do so or not.[12] In a sense, all these papers describe the desperate and, in the end futile quest of a nation for self-determination and justice in a world dominated by forces beyond the power of any small country to influence.

N.F. Dreisziger

NOTES

1. Mario D. Fenyo, *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary; German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972): 108.

2. For recent discussions of Hungary's wartime losses see Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary from Kun to Kadar* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1979): 149-95; Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982): 300-12 *in passim*.

3. Kovrig, *Communism*, p. 195.

4. Ibid., pp. 195f. For a detailed discussion of the economic consequences of the Soviet occupation of Hungary see Andras B. Gollner, "Foundations of Soviet Domination and Communist Political Power in Hungary: 1945-1950," in N.F. Dreisziger, ed., *The Hungarian Revolution Twenty Years After*, special issue of the *Canadian American Review of Hungarian Studies*, III, no. 2 (Fall 1976): 73-85.

5. On this see Kalman Janics, *Czechoslovak Policy and the Hungarian Minority, 1945-1948* (New York: Brooklyn College Studies on Society in Change No. 18, 1982). Distributed by Columbia University Press.

6. The most unprotected of such groups in the immediate post-war period was the German. Indeed, after the war tens of thousands of Germans were expelled from East Central European countries, including Hungary. The disappearance of the Germans as a substantial cultural minority from Hungary was just another of the dramatic consequences of the Second World War.

7. This forcible isolation had greatly diminished in the wake of the 1956 revolution, indicating that in some respects the uprising was a successful one.

8. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see the introduction to my *Hungary's Way to World War II* (Toronto: Helicon, 1968): 9-12.

9. Thomas L. Sakmyster, "The Hungarian State Visit to Germany of August, 1938: Some New Evidence on Hungary in Hitler's Pre-Munich Policy," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 3 (1969): 677-91.

10. Thomas L. Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis 1936-1939* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1980): 219.

11. The Second Vienna Award had many serious consequences for Hungary. The most important ones are mentioned by Dr. Balogh. Two others were concesssions made by the Hungarians in domestic affairs (such as the extensive guarantees granted to the country's increasingly radicalized German minority) and in the realm of external trade. One further consequence of the events of the summer of 1940 was the entry of Rumania into the Axis orbit, a development that inspired a veritable race for Hitler's graces between leaders in Budapest and Bucharest.

12. Still another dimension of this tragedy is brought to our attention in the fifth paper: the lasting bitterness among Hungarians about their country's participation in the war, indicated by the feelings of anger or guilt that discussions of this subject usually evoke in them.

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The Impact of Trianon upon Hungary and the Hungarian Mind: The Nature of Interwar Hungarian Irredentism

Steven B. Vardy

Developments in interwar Hungary were determined above all by the peace treaty signed in the Grand Palace of Versailles on June 4, 1920. The terms of this treaty were so harsh and punitive that one looks in vain for parallels in modern European history. On the basis of this treaty Hungary lost 71.4% of her territory and 63.6% of her population. Of the four beneficiary states Rumania alone received a larger share (39,800 square miles) of the country's former territory than that which was left to Hungary (35,900 square miles). While some of this loss could be justified on the basis of ethnic-linguistic considerations, this was not true about a sizable portion of the lost territories. As a matter of fact, historic Hungary's dismemberment also entailed the transfer of large Magyar-inhabited territories, along with close to 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians—fully one-third of the nation—to the new successor states. All this was done in the name of the very same principle—the principle of national self-determination—for which historic Hungary was torn apart. It should also be added that, with the exception of a small territory around Sopron in Western Hungary, the Hungarian demand for a plebiscite in the detached territories was rejected, and in this manner the principle of self-determination was once again violated. Moreover, the result of this rather arbitrarily and punitively applied principle was the creation of several new or enlarged states whose ethnic composition was hardly less mixed than that of Hungary prior to 1918. Thus, even if we count the Czechs and the Slovaks as one nation (which we can hardly do), Czechoslovakia had 34.7% minorities, while Poland had 30.4%, Rumania 25%, and Yugoslavia had no majority nationality at all. One can hardly question that in those days the principle of

national self-determination had to be accomodated somehow. While the Treaty of Trianon was an accomodation of that principle, it was also a violation of it.[1] It is in this light that one has to view the Hungarian reaction to this peace treaty.

The signing of the peace treaty was preceded in Hungary by the trauma of a lost war, two revolutions (a liberal-socialist and a communist), as well as a counterrevolution which, while restoring much of the old social and political system, was unable to save the country's territorial integrity (and not even many of its Magyar-inhabited territories). The regime that followed these upheavals was headed by Admiral Miklós Horthy (1868-1957), the last commander of the Austro-Hungarian fleet. The regime's orientation was determined almost exclusively by the psychological shock of Trianon and by the overriding desire to undo that treaty, whose terms were unacceptable to all Hungarians regardless of social background or ideological orientation. As a matter of fact, the shock of Trianon was so pervasive and so keenly felt that the syndrome it produced can only be compared to a malignant national disease.

The nature and magnitude of Trianon's psychological shock upon the contemporary Hungarian mind was perhaps best expressed by Gyula Szekfű (1883-1955), the "father" of the Hungarian version of the so-called *Geistesgeschichte* School of history and a dominant figure of interwar Hungarian historiography.

Szekfű gave vent to his feelings in the agonizing introduction to his first post-Trianon work, *Három nemzedék. Egy hanyatló kor története* (Three generations. The history of a declining age) (1920), in which he summarized his views on the causes of his nation's decline and fall. Szekfű wrote:

> This book is my personal experience. In the midst of those trying events into which the catastrophe of October 1918 (the collapse of Austria-Hungary) had thrust us ..., I felt...that I would never be able to recover my strength and my will to work until having taken account of the (causes of that) decline that had led us to this disaster. I simply had to face up to the forces that have dragged my nation out of a stream of healthy evolution. Thus did I come to write this book, and...thus did I redeem my soul.[2]

The writing of *Három nemzedék* constituted a spiritual

catharsis through which Szekfű was able to release some of the psychological pressures that had accumulated within him. Not every Hungarian was able to follow this path and not every Hungarian intellectual was capable of producing a work of such proportions and significance. Yet, virtually every noted historian, sociologist and political thinker has written his own "Trianon book" or at least a "Trianon pamphlet." This holds true even for such left-leaning cosmopolitan thinkers as Oscar Jászi (1875-1957), associated with the progressive *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), and the literary critic and publicist Hugo Ignótus (1869-1949) of the equally progressive *Nyugat* (The West). [3]

The Trianon shock thus became a lasting national malady that ever since 1918-1920 has ravaged the minds and hearts of most Hungarians, notwithstanding the fact that during the past three-and-a-half decades the open discussion or teaching of the nature and impact of this treaty has been a taboo in Hungary. [4] That this was and is the case is best demonstrated by the recent rumblings in certain Hungarian intellectual circles where, for the first time in many years, a few people dare to talk and write about Trianon and the psychological dislocations it has caused. We may add that this new daring is partially the result of these intellectuals' growing concern for the Hungarian minorities beyond Hungary's Trianon frontiers, whose plight is becoming better known and less tolerable even to the largely depoliticized and denationalized average Hungarian.

An example of this growing concern and daring can be found in historian Péter Hanák's article in the July 25, 1981 issue of the influential *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Literature). Entitled "Relative National Consciousness," this essay deals, at least in part, with the nature and development of the aforementioned Trianon syndrome in the period since World War II. Hanák writes:

> We have been unable to digest Trianon consciously until our very own days. (After 1945) the whole complex problem of Trianon was placed on this list of those taboos that touched the path of nationalism. True, we did mention occasionally that the Treaty of Trianon was an unjust and an imperialistic peace. But we also added immediately that interwar revisionism was conceived in the nuptial bed of nationalism. Moreover, even though each of these assertions were

> true individually, and each contained valid value judgments, neither from a logical, nor from a psychological or consciousness point of view were we able to resolve the contradictions between them. This is all the more lamentable as without examining the lasting shock impact of Trianon, we can neither approach, nor hope to understand the Hungarian *Weltanschauung* and the Hungarian national consciousness in the twentieth century. [5]

Having pointed to the problem caused by the Hungarian nation's lack of freedom to talk about this great national malady, Hanák continues by giving us a most penetrating and discerning assessment of the nature of the impact of the Trianon-shock upon the Hungarian psyche:

> Our collapse in the war and (the terms of the Treaty of) Trianon have found the nation unprepared. Everything that up to that point used to be absolute, concrete and unambiguous was suddenly shattered. The unity of our country and of our nation vanished, and so did all our fictitious conceptualizations, as well as all historical and geographical realities...The trauma of defeat was so terribly deep, and it shook the nation's life-foundations to such a degree that for years and even for decades we could hardly expect anyone...to come up with an objective assessment (of this whole affair). After all, (Trianon meant) not only the dismemberment of a nation, but also the sudden relativization of such formerly absolute concepts as the *nation* and *national destiny*...One can hardly be amazed, therefore, that the initial reaction was (an intense desire) to revise the whole peace system... Trianon had in fact set a double trap for the Hungarian nation. On the one hand, it conscribed all elemental patriotism, all inclination to reconstruct one's nation, all justified emotions of grief into the service of...the counterrevolutionary regime; on the other hand, its flagrant injustices beclouded its righteous aspects, namely those of its features that were the unavoidable consequences of national developments in Central and Southeastern Europe. As such (Trianon) prevented us from recognizing the relativity of our place and role in the world, and the necessity of establishing good relations with the Danubian peoples...Thus, the Trianon trap had a tighter grip of the majority of our nation than did the dualistic system (that preceded it). The most

> grotesque aspect of this tragic trap was that thereafter (Hungarian) national consciousness found itself bound not to a living, but to a non-existing, to a vanished absolute. [6]

If—as is evident from Hanák's essay—Trianon produced a trauma that is still haunting most Hungarians after six decades of history and three and a half decades of enforced silence, how much more was this true in the years following the implementation of this punitive treaty? Whether we like it or not, or admit it or not, Trianon had in fact determined almost everything in interwar Hungary and this was true notwithstanding the fact that some elements of the country's political and social leadership were not only "sufferers," but also unwitting "beneficiaries" of the Trianon disease. This basically means that those who were opponents of the country's socio-economic transformation and modernization were able to blame Trianon for all of the nation's problems, as well as to use these problems as pretexts for hindering the necessary reforms. The latter, however, were much fewer in number than claimed by the regime's critics and detractors. The Trianon disease was and—to a large degree—is a national malady that engulfed and still engulfs much of the nation. Thus one did not really have to use artificial means to make it into the number one cause of the nation's problems during the interwar period. But before turning to a more detailed analysis of some aspects of its impact upon the Hungarian mind during those years, let us briefly summarize the history of that age.

The Horthy Regime

The political system and regime represented by Admiral Horthy has been referred to during the last three and a half decades by a number of derogatory expressions. [7] Thus, it has been called the period of "Horthy Fascism," "Horthy dictatorship," as well as the age of the "counterrevolutionary regime"—the latter being basically a self-selected term. While rejecting the first two as basically untrue, and accepting the latter only with certain qualifications (i.e. for the early phase of the Horthy regime), I prefer to call interwar Hungary's political system "conservative nationalist," [8] and many of its social and cultural manifestations as "neo-Baroque." (The latter term, by

the way, was first used by historian Szekfű, who was also one of the most influential ideologists of that period.)[9] That the Horthy regime was conservative and nationalistic can hardly be questioned. But in addition to these two features it was also characterized by rabid anti-communism a powerful and polarized class structure the social and political pre-eminence of the gentry and aristocracy a virtual caste position of the military officer corps an unusual emphasis upon one's descent and inherited or acquired titles extreme respect for authority a kind of traditional anti-Semitism (which in its main course had nothing to do with the racist anti-Semitism of the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators) and most importantly, a lack of adequate social consciousness or concern for the country's impoverished rural and urban workers. Simultaneously, however, the Horthy regime was also characterized by a functioning parliamentarism, by a somewhat narrowly based, though hardly nominal multi-party system, and by a legal system that stood for "law and order" and which on the whole was just and fair.

Hungary's regent, Admiral Horthy, whose name became almost synonymous with the period between the two world wars, was basically a conservative and traditionalist both by upbringing and temperament. He was strongly attached to the well-tried values of the old regime and suspicious of all new experimentations that might result in social dislocations, disorders and insubordinations that seemed to characterize the twentieth century.

Although a convinced conservative, Horthy was neither a dictator nor a tyrant. As a matter of fact, he was generally scrupulous in observing the terms of Hungary's undoubtedly dated constitutional system. His ideals coincided with the social and political values of the age of Emperor Francis Joseph. For this reason, he detested radicalism and revolution in any form—be it from the left or from the right. In his view, these radical movements were all bent on destroying that harmonious "neo-Baroque" social order he so dearly loved. Horthy's visible conservatism, however, did not necessarily make him an opponent of the much needed social and economic reforms. But because he detested mass movements, he was both suspicious of and extremely cautious about such reforms. Nor was he able to conceive of reform in any other way, except gradually and within

certain legal and social limitations. As a result, by the 1930s he was rapidly being left behind by all of the major reform movements, be they on the left, on the right, or somewhere in the middle, such as was the case of the so-called Populist Movement of that period.

For twenty-four years after 1920, Horthy reigned undisturbed and unchallenged as Hungary's regent and supreme military commander. He had the right to convene and dissolve the parliament, to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, as well as to return undesirable bills to the parliament. After 1937 his powers as regent were further increased, and thereafter he could not even be called to account by that elected body. Horthy, however, never transgressed his powers, and in most instances he even refrained from using them to their fullest extent. He tried to play the role of a benevolent constitutional monarch, and partly for this reason he did enjoy a considerable degree of genuine popularity. It was his prestige and popularity that saved Hungary from going too far to the radical right before World War II, and some of his moderating influence was felt even after Hungary's German occupation on March 19, 1944.

Like Regent Horthy himself, Hungary's political system was also basically conservative. The right to vote was limited and circumscribed by age, sex, property, educational and other qualifications (e.g. open voting in the countryside), which generally kept the number of the voters well below 50 percent of the country's adult population (i.e. between 26.6 percent and 33.8 percent of the total population). [10] Despite this, there were in fact regular elections throughout the period, and these were held with the participation of several political parties that represented various shades of political opinions from the extreme right to as far left as the Social Democrats. Many of these parties were small, ephemeral and usually bound to specific "charismatic" or not-so-charismatic leaders. Those on the conservative right generally called themselves " Christian," "National," or both, while those in the middle or on the left usually referred to themselves as "Liberal," "Democratic," or "Socialist." Most of these parties went through various mergers, splits, and re-mergers as dictated by their ideological convictions and goals, or by the personal or national aspirations of their leaders.

In the early 1920s, the two most prominent of these parties

were the conservative nationalist Christian National Unity Party and the peasant-oriented Smallholders' Party, which together constituted the so-called "Christian Bloc." On February 23, 1922, these two parties merged to form the Catholic-Christian Smallholders', Peasant, and Bourgeois Party (*Keresztény-Keresztyény Kisgazda, Földmüves és Polgári Párt*), commonly known as the Party of Unity (*Egységes Párt*), which then served through the next two decades—at times under slightly altered names—as the party of the government, which was always in control. During the 1930s these traditional parties were joined by several new political parties of the radical right, most of whom ultimately merged into Ferenc Szálasi's (1897-1946) Arrow Cross Party—the par excellence exponent of National Socialism in Hungary.

In spite of its name, the Party of Unity was far less united than generally presumed. Instead of being a monolithic organization, it was really a collection of various lesser parties and interest groups, all with their own special goals and programs. These included most everyone from the agrarians to the industrialists, from the pro-Habsburg legitimists to the "free electionist royalists," as well as the militant revisionists and the advocates of pragmatism and compromise in foreign policy. They were bound together only by their commonly shared irredentism and anti-communism, and by their basic attachment to the conservative social order. Most of them also subscribed to a certain amount of anti-Semitism that stemmed largely from the heavy Jewish participation in Béla Kún's Bolshevik revolution in Hungary. But outside the initial months of the counterrevolutionary reaction, this anti-Semitism manifested itself more in polemics than in an actual governmental policy. As a matter of fact, anti-Semitism did not really become part of the official policy until World War II, and even then only grudgingly and largely under outside pressures from Nazi Germany. It should perhaps also be mentioned that in spite of the Unity Party's attachments to the traditional order of things, it had a significant number of individuals and power groups that were dedicated to various degrees and levels of social and economic reforms, some of which were in fact implemented during the 1920s and 1930s.

Next to ever present revisionism, the first of the two interwar decades in Hungary was characterized primarily by a policy of political, economic, social and ideological-cultural consolida-

tion, insofar as this was permitted by the territorial, national, economic and psychological dislocations caused by Trianon. The man primarily responsible for this consolidation was Count István Bethlen (1874-1947), a Transylvanian-Hungarian magnate, whose ancestral homeland had been attached to Rumania. Bethlen was a cultured, intelligent, clever and pragmatic man, but he was perhaps even more conservative than the regent himself. He began his prime ministership by terminating the remnants of the disorder and lawlessness connected with the two revolutions and the counterrevolution. This normalization was accompanied by the neutralization of the regime's most significant legitimate opposition through the inclusion of the Smallholders' Party into the Party of Unity, and by making the latter into a relatively docile instrument of his government's policies.

Bethlen also initiated a foreign policy to undo the effects of Trianon by all possible peaceful means. His most significant step in this direction was rapprochement with Italy, and the signing of the Italo-Hungarian Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration in 1927 (April 5). This treaty was basically the first momentous break in Hungary's diplomatic isolation, after years of encirclement by the French-supported Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia). From this time onward the Italian orientation remained one of the cornerstones of Hungarian foreign policy, which ultimately led to some tangible, albeit temporary success in the form of the Italian-supported partial revisions of Hungary's Trianon frontiers between 1938 and 1941.[11]

The relatively peaceful Bethlen Era came to an end in 1931. It did so largely because of the world depression, which undermined Hungary's fragile economy and thereby the whole Bethlen system. The country's increasing economic plight, the accompanying poverty and unemployment, and in particular the rising dissatisfaction of its unemployed young intelligentsia created a situation that made the upcoming change unavoidable. This change took the form of the fall of Bethlen's conservative regime and the rise of a new regime and spirit that pushed Hungary gradually in the direction of the radical right.

After a brief interlude, the man who replaced Bethlen in 1932 and initiated this shift to the right was General Gyula Gömbös (1886-1936), one of the leaders of the postwar counterrevolution.

Gömbös was a man of relatively humble birth, but with a phenomenal ego, who became one of the most vocal spokesmen of the new *völkisch* nationalism that engulfed Hungary in the wake of the Trianon tragedy. Perhaps because of his populist nationalism, and perhaps also because of his origins, Gömbös appeared more amenable to social reform. But—probably under the influence of Mussolini and the Italian model—he wished these necessary social changes to take place under the leadership of an all-powerful *folk tribune* and in this case he was naturally thinking of himself.

Gömbös promised much, but once in power he delivered relatively little by way of social reform. True, he abandoned Bethlen's aristocratic restraint, but he replaced it primarily with a sonorous sloganism and with a growing air of radicalism. In foreign policy Gömbös continued Bethlen's pro-Italian orientation. At the same time, however, he also moved closer to Germany. His dream and goal was a form of German-Italian-Hungarian partnership and joint control over Central and Southeastern Europe a goal which, in light of the vast differences in the human and material resources of these three countries, lacked all elements of realism. Gömbös's shift in foreign policy had momentous implications for Hungary, for it threatened to carry the country into the Berlin-Rome Axis, as well as toward a less-than peaceful solution to its revisionist claims. Moreover, it also resulted in the rise of various pro-German elements to positions of influence in the army and the state bureaucracy, which in turn made it even more difficult for the country's conservative political leadership to keep Hungary out of dangerous diplomatic and even military entanglements with Nazi Germany.

Gömbös's prime ministership also coincided with the birth of the first Hungarian National Socialist groups and political parties, including Ferenc Szálasi's Party of National Will (*Nemzeti Akarat Pártja*), which he founded in March 1935. This party was the most important forerunner of the much better known Arrow Cross Party (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt*), which subsequently unified most of the Hungarian Nazi and Fascist organizations on October 23, 1937.[12]

Following Gömbös's death on October 6, 1936, Horthy and his conservative followers decided to put a stop to this dangerous rightward drift in Hungary. The conservative wing of the

government party allied itself with various anti-rightist and anti-German groups, including the royalist Christian Party, the resurrected Smallholders' Party, the Social Democratic Party and a number of smaller liberal groups. Their opponents consisted of the government party's right wing, supported by various other smaller rightist parties and political formations. The conservatives stressed the need for domestic peace, order, traditional values and peaceful revisionism. The radicals, on the other hand, argued for social reforms, a closer relationship with Germany, and a more militant foreign policy to achieve Hungary's national goals. Regent Horthy naturally supported the first of these groups, but the general trend of the times favoured the latter. And the spirit of the times appeared to have captured even some of the Horthy-selected successors of Gömbös who were appointed specifically for the purpose of stemming this rightward tide. As a matter of fact, two of these prime ministers (Béla Imrédy and László Bárdossy) actually accelerated this trend to the right, while one of them (Bárdossy) was responsible for taking the country into the war and thereby sealing Hungary's fate once more. True, this declaration of war against the Soviet Union was made illegally, i.e. without the knowledge and approval of the Hungarian Parliament, but ultimately this made no difference. Hungary's presence on the side of Nazi Germany and later in the ranks of the defeated states made it impossible for her to retain even those regained territories to which she was fully entitled simply on the basis of ethnic-linguistic considerations. In this way the Hungarian nation and national psyche suffered another serious blow after World War II a blow that not even thirty-six years of enforced silence has been able to eradicate.

Reaction to Trianon

As has been seen, the interwar period in Hungary was an era of social and political conservatism that was increasingly under pressure from right-wing radicalism. This period was also an age of emotional nationalism that engulfed the whole nation after World War I and the country's dismemberment. This emotional nationalism was different from its immediate predecessor in that it gave birth to a powerful desire to act, i.e. to save whatever could be saved and to restore whatever could be restored. This activism manifested itself in many shapes and forms from the

foundation of scores of secret societies and national defense leagues to the birth of new tendencies in education, literature, the arts, as well as historiography. In light of space limitations and my own interests, this paper will focus on the change in historical thinking and history writing as an example of the "Trianon Syndrome" in interwar Hungary.

The so-called patriotic secret societies were established immediately after the war, and their primary and almost exclusive goal was to undo by whatever means the terms of Trianon. The best known and most influential of these societies included the Hungarian National Defense Association (*Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület, MOVE*), the Association of Awakening Hungarians (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete, ÉME*), The Blood Oath Society of the Double Cross (*Kettőskereszt Vérszövetség*), the United Christian League (*Egyesült Keresztény Liga*), the more extremist Hungarian Cultural League (*Magyar Kultúrliga*) led by the white terrorist Pál Prónay (1875-1945), the Federation of the Nameless (*Névtelenek Szövetsége*), the Association of Etelköz (*Etelközi Szövetség, EKSZ or EX*), which was also known under the pseudonyms of Council of Chiefs (*Vezérek Tanácsa, VT*) and the Hungarian Scientific Association for the Protection of Ethnicity (*Magyar Tudományos Fajvédő Egyesület*). In addition to their emotional nationalism and activism, the most common features of these associations included staunch anti-communist and counter-revolutionary sentiments, as well as various degrees of anti-Semitism, and most importantly, powerful irredentism. [13]

Side by side with these and similar action-oriented secret societies, the interwar years also gave birth to an almost equal number of non-secret irredentist organizations, whose primary goal was to fight for revisionism by means of publishing propagandistic or semi-scholarly works and by establishing contacts with various influential Western political and scholarly circles. The most active of these societies included the Hungarian Territorial Integrity League (*Magyarország Területi Épségének Védelmi Ligája*), which began to publish a series of informative pamphlets on Hungary's case as early as 1919 the National Association of Defense Leagues (a *Védőligák Országos Szövetsége*), established in order to coordinate the work of all openly irredentist associations the Hungarian National Federation (*Magyar Nemzeti Szövetség*), which eventually absorbed

both of the above associations and the Hungarian Revisionist League (*Magyar Revizió's Liga*), established in 1927 as a federation of about three dozen irredentist organizations, largely as a result of the pro-Hungarian revisionist campaign initiated by Lord Harold Sidney Harmsworth Rothermere, a significant figure of contemporary British journalism.[14] Revisionist work and revisionist agitation, however, was also carried out by such influential scholarly or semi-scholarly organizations as the Hungarian Historical Association, the Hungarian Geographical Association, the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Association, and later also by a number of research institutes, including the Political Science Institute of the Hungarian Statistical Association, the minority institutes of the universities of Budapest, Pécs, Debrecen and Szeged, the Hungarian Historical Institute, and the Transylvanian Research Institute. These research institutes, however, were founded only in the period between 1935 and 1941, and consequently their impact was probably less than could have been otherwise.[15]

While the composition of the membership and the nature of the irredentist activities of these various societies and associations were very different, they did have a common goal the revision of Hungary's new frontiers, even though they disagreed regarding the means to achieve this goal. The secret societies, for example, often engaged in activities that later proved to be unacceptable and even detrimental to the cause. Their power to act irresponsibly, however, was soon curtailed by Prime Minister Bethlen during his policy of consolidation.

At the same time the revisionist activities of the purely irredentist or scholarly associations continued and even increased with the support of the regime. But it was soon filled with the spirit of "neo-nationalism," a new ideological orientation developed by Count Kuno Klebelsberg (1875-1932), the President of the Hungarian Historical Association from 1917 to 1932, and Hungary's Minister for Culture and Religion during the first half of the interwar period, from 1922 until 1931. Moreover, because the Hungarian crusade for the revision of the new frontiers was based almost exclusively on historical rights (and not on the principle of self-determination), the heaviest burden in demonstrating the righteousness of the Hungarian claims fell on the shoulders of Hungary's historians, who, in addition, were obliged to readjust their views in the spirit of neo-nationalism.

Formulated by Klebelsberg during the mid-1920s, neo-nationalism was basically an effort to adjust Hungarian nationalism and Hungarian historical thinking to the new realities of the post-Trianon period namely, to the realities that constricted Hungarian political control to a small central section of the former Kingdom of Hungary, while at the same time leaving one-third of the nation on the other side of the new frontiers. In light of these conditions it was necessary to reorient the attention of the Magyars from the concept of the *state* to the concept of the *nation*, and from the consciousness of their *political dominance* to a belief in their continued *cultural pre-eminence* in the Carpathian Basin.[16]

While emphasizing the significance of the *nation* over the *state*, the new ideology of neo-nationalism also stressed the alleged unique "state-forming capacities" of the Magyars. Apparently, Klebelsberg was convinced that if the Hungarians were able to retain their cultural pre-eminence in the area, then — in conjunction with their capacity for political leadership — this pre-eminence would ultimately lead to the restoration of historic Hungary's unity. It was this belief that prompted Klebelsberg to demand the reorientation of Hungarian nationalism from confrontation to cooperation with the region's other nationalities although this cooperation was still to be carried out under Hungarian political and intellectual leadership.

The views formulated by Klebelsberg were generally acclaimed by most historians, who were probably more affected by Trianon than any other segment of the Hungarian intelligentsia — with the possible exception of the psychologically even more sensitive poets. For this reason, examining the role, attitude and activities of historians is a good way of measuring the impact of Trianon upon the Hungarian psyche. And this is both natural and understandable, for contrary to the situation in our own age of rapid change, historians of that period were accustomed to "living in the past." They were the products of a traditional world, attached to their nation's traditions. For them the legitimate study and research of history usually ended at least a half a century before their own time. They studied, re-studied and even re-lived psychologically the ups and downs of their nation's history. Thus, the shock of Trianon probably affected them to a far greater degree than most of their countrymen.[17] This is all the more likely, as in addition to having lost a large

segment of their country and a third of their nation, they also lost much of the "historical stage" that used to serve as a forum of their nation's history and of their efforts to re-create that history.

The loss of this historical stage also meant the loss of many written and unwritten sources of Hungarian history, along with the whole intellectual-cultural environment that inspired historians in the past and served as a catalyst in practicing their art. For these historians, Trianon also meant the end of a relatively comfortable existence and a secure way of life, which turned the national catastrophe into a personal calamity that was bound to affect their relationship to Clio's art. Their initial reaction was one of confusion and the production of numerous so-called "Trianon books" and "Trianon pamphlets." Subsequently, however, they fell in line with the basic orientation of Bethlen's policy of consolidation and with Klebelsberg's philosophy of neo-nationalism, and undertook a systematic effort to refute the historical arguments that had been used to justify the Treaty of Trianon by attempting to prove the lack of validity of the anti-Hungarian claims. By doing so, however, they also expressed their disregard for twentieth-century realities, namely that historical arguments now had very little weight when confronted with the new principle of national self-determination.

Although all Hungarian historians were one in their denunciation of Trianon and in offering their services to the cause of revisionism, the historian who was most effective in applying the principles of neo-nationalism to history-writing, and did so on a rather sophisticated level, was the already mentioned Gyula Szekfű. But Szekfű did more than that he augmented Klebelsberg's views with his own convictions to the effect that Hungary's destiny—its past and future—were linked inseparably to what he called the "German Christian World."

Szekfű first summarized and synthesized his views on the nature of Hungarian historical evolution in 1917, in his well-known work *A magyar állam életrajza* (The biography of the Hungarian State), wherein he discussed the history of his nation within the context of the history of "German Christian" Central Europe, which he regarded as the most important single factor in Hungary's millennial history.[18] And even though the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the Bismarckian German Empire seemed to have ended this whole German-Christian Central European configuration, Szekfű continued to promote this idea into the late

1930s and the early 1940s, when he turned against it because of his intense dislike of Nazism. This is evident both from his writings and his editorial policy at the influential *Magyar Szemle* (Hungarian Review), which he founded in 1927.[19] In the second edition of his above-mentioned work, for example, Szekfű expressed the view that "the Hungarians can only hope to escape from their current predicament if they follow the well-trodden path...,i.e. if they walk hand in hand with Germanic Central Europe." In his view, this was "one of the clear-cut teachings of...(Hungarian) history," which can hardly be disregarded without perils and misfortunes to the nation as a whole.[20]

One cannot bypass this view without pointing out that prior to Trianon—and to some degree even beyond—many Hungarians, including numerous historians, held anti-German and anti-Habsburg views. Thus, Szekfű's belief in the unavoidable common destiny of Germany and Hungary was far from popular in Hungary and it remained so nothwithstanding Szekfű's bemoaning of Hungary's independence and all that it implied after the disintegration of the realm of the Habsburgs. But to Szekfű, independence without power, independence at the expense of historic Hungary's integrity, was anything but desirable. As he put it:

> Those of us who amidst those nerve-wracking days of our collapse were able to preserve our sense of history...were also forced to recognize...that our suddenly gained freedom is only the freedom...of a hungry winter wolf. Having been freed from the clutches of Central Europe, we stood there alone and friendless... We were free, but a bloodied and despoiled small nation... A free prey to be robbed, looted and destroyed freely by anyone who happened to be stronger.

Then, as if to drive home his point, Szekfű finished his assessment of the situation by pointing to the harsh consequences of this "freedom" (i.e. separation) from Central Europe

> And the "stronger ones" did come..., and the borders of our free nation became ever more constricted... Thus did Hungary — freed from dependence on Central Europe — shrink back by centuries within the span of only a few days.[21]

Although anti-Habsburg and anti-German sentiments continued

to pervade a sizable segment of interwar Hungary's educated circles, Szekfű's above analysis of Hungary's dependence on Germanic Central Europe was soon widely accepted. As a matter of fact, this belief became one of the important dogmas of interwar Hungarian thinking, both among politicians and among intellectuals. It became an important belief, alongside the already mentioned emphasis upon the alleged unique historical role to the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. These views became part of the official cultural policy initiated by Klebelsberg, and they were also incorporated into Szekfű's influential multi-volumed *Magyar történet* (Magyar History), co-authored with the noted medievalist and cultural politician, Bálint Hóman (1885-1951), during the late 1920s and early 1930s.[22] This work popularized Szekfű's view's on such a grand scale that they soon came to form the cornerstone of interwar Hungarian historical thinking. Szekfű's ideas influenced the thinking and publications of most professional and non-professional historians and scholars in the related disciplines and perhaps even more importantly, also permeated the history textbooks of that period.

In line with the official cultural policy of that period, the history textbooks—written by such prominent historians as Sándor Domanovszky, Dezső Szabó, István Miskolczy and György Balanyi — were all at pains to emphasize Hungary's and the Magyar peoples' relationship to Germanic Christian Central Europe.[23] They also stressed their nation's primary historical rights to the Carpathian Basin, as well as its alleged special capacity for political leadership and cultural pre-eminence in that area. Nor were they modest in pointing out their nation's role and sacrifice in having defended Western Christendom against "Oriental barbarism," a phenomenon that was not in harmony with the new so-called Turanian orientation that also gained some popularity in Hungary in the wake of the Trianon tragedy.[24] (This claim of having been the defenders of Western Christendom, by the way, was not limited to the Hungarians. Similar claims have also been advanced by most of the nationalities of Central and Southeastern Europe.)

While portraying the unique historical role of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin and deriving therefrom a historically justifiable claim to the whole area, these history textbooks also stressed the singular geographical and economic unity of historic

Hungary. They proclaimed its dismemberment an unnatural act, which was against the innate interest of the region and its inhabitants. These books also asserted that the abnormal state of affairs created by the Treaty could not possibly be upheld for a protracted period of time. In light of the above, it should not even come as a surprise that geography in interwar Hungary was taught as if Trianon had never taken place. Whole generations of youngsters grew up having only historic Hungary's borders etched into their minds and fully convinced that Trianon Hungary was but a temporary phenomenon that was bound to disappear like an evil nightmare.

Although understandable, this attitude was in a sense a kind of self-deception that was also evident in many other spheres of contemporary Hungarian life. One of the most visible manifestations of this tendency was the increasing popularity of the above mentioned Turanian movement, which, within the context of interwar Hungary, was both a form of escapism, as well as a form of reaction against the so-called "faithless" and "treacherous" West that had abandoned Hungary. It should be kept in mind that the Hungarians were truly convinced of their singular role in having served as one of the most important bulwarks of Western Christendom, and they expected gratitude in return. Instead of gratitude, however, they were rewarded by a total lack of appreciation for their role, which was then crowned—so they believed—by Hungary's dismemberment at Trianon. The extent of this real or imagined "ingratitude" shook the Hungarians to the point where many of them, particularly the less sophisticated, were willing to turn their backs on the West, while at the same time searching for help and solace amidst their real or imagined relatives in the East. Some of these disenchanted Hungarians were willing to go so far as to call for purging "Hungarian Civilization" of all of its millennial Christian culture and faith, and for its replacement by an allegedly indigenous and ancient, "pure" Magyar culture and religion. A number of them actually proclaimed King St. Stephen, the Christianizer of Hungary, as his nation's number one enemy, while at the same time demanding that Stephen's pagan adversaries—such as Koppány and Vazul—be proclaimed the new heroes and "saint" of the Magyars. As one can expect, most thoughtful Hungarians declined to go along with this extreme and naive manifestation of Turanism, which Szekfű rightfully

called a form of "new paganism." [25] The rise and relative popularity of this strange phenomenon, however, still tells us something. It reveals, among others, the extent of the psychological dislocation and the depth of the emotional misery in which the Hungarian nation found itself after Trianon. Moreover, it also reveals some of the subtle motivating forces that may have been responsible for pushing the nation in the direction of radicalism and various forms of extremism particularly in light of its apparent inability to receive a relatively just hearing for its complaints before an accepted and authoritative forum of the makers of world politics. Despair is probably the worst possible counselor, and in a state of hopelessness, individuals as well as nations may lose their direction and commit acts which in retrospect appear irrational and unthinkable. This was certainly demonstrated by some of the developments in interwar Hungary.

Conclusions

It may be concluded from the above that interwar Hungary's most fundamental problem was the inability of the Hungarian psyche to adjust itself to the new realities, i.e. to free itself from the national malady that we can rightfully call the "Trianon Syndrome." This, in turn, prevented the nation from trying to solve its most urgent social, economic and political problems in the spirit of realism. At the beginning of this period, the Hungarian reaction to Trianon was emotional, haphazard, misdirected and outright wrong. Later this reaction took at least two distinctly different forms on the one hand, the country's political and intellectual leaders initiated a systematic, though not too successful effort to undo Trianon by trying to persuade the treaty's makers of its fundamental injustices, while at the same time searching for appropriate military alliances for its eventual overthrow, should all peaceful efforts at revision fail. On the other hand, some of the earlier misdirected efforts continued both in the form of the increased popularity of the Turanist self-delusions, as well as in the rise and spread of another form of "new paganism" (i.e. Fascism) that offered quick, simplistic and often less than moral solutions to the nation's complex and long-standing problems.

It can hardly be questioned that the Turanist and Fascist tendencies were misdirected. But one also has to question the

wisdom of the official anti-Trianon policy of the Hungarian government and intellectual circles. One of the greatest mistakes of the official anti-Trianon propaganda machine was that it relied too heavily on historical arguments, which carry very little weight in the twentieth century. The basic inadequacy of this approach should have been evident to the country's intellectual and political leaders all the more so, as historic Hungary's dismemberment was done in the name of the principle of national self-determination. Had they been aware of this basic tenet, they would have placed much greater emphasis on pointing out the basic injustices of Trianon precisely from the point of view of this principle. Thus, instead of arguing as to who settled first in Hungary and when, they should have demonstrated to the world that transferring one-third of the Hungarian nation under foreign rule violated the very same principle which the peacemakers used to justify the dismemberment of a long-standing historical state. Naturally, this policy would not have resulted in the re-establishment of historic Hungary, but it may have produced an atmosphere more conducive to partial revision, i.e. for the reacquisition of the Hungarian-inhabited territories immediately adjacent to the new borders. Given the shock effect of Trianon, Hungarians apparently were unable to follow a path of compromise. They stressed their unwillingness to ever give up the idea of reconstituting historic Hungary, which they embodied into the slogan "*Nem! Nem! Soha!*" (No! No! Never!). Moreover, they tried to regain everything largely on the basis of historical arguments. But in doing so, they may have relinquished the only viable argument—outside of military might — that carried weight in those days: the argument based on ethnic and linguistic self-determination. True, as time passed, the Hungarian government was increasingly forced to accept the idea of partial revision but it accepted this notion only temporarily, and then began to apply it at the wrong time and with the help of the wrong nations. Although unintended, this policy made Hungary into both the "unwilling" and the "last" satellite of Nazi Germany for which the country and the nation soon had to once again pay a heavy price.[26]

NOTES

1. For a discussion of Hungary's territorial and population losses in consequence of the Treaty of Trianon see: C.A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors* (Oxford: The

University Press, 1973). See also the relevant sections of such popular English language works as Dominic G. Kosáry and S.B. Várdy, *History of the Hungarian Nation* (Astor Park, Florida: Danubian Press, Inc., 1969); Denis Sinor, *History of Hungary* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959): 284-5; and C.A. Macartney, *Hungary; A Short History* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1962): 205-7.

2. Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék. Egy hanyatló kor története* (Three generations. The history of a declining age.) (Budapest: Élet Irodalmi és Nyomdai R.T., 1920): 4.

3. The works in question are: Oszkár Jászi, *Magyar kálvária - magyar feltámadás* (Hungarian calvary - Hungarian resurrection) (Vienna, 1920); and Hugó Ignotus, *The Dismembered Hungary. Written especially for the American Readers* (Berlin, 1920). For many other similar works see S.B. Várdy's "Trianon in Interwar Hungarian Historiography," in Béla K. Király, Peter Pastor and Ivan Sanders, eds., *Total War and Peacemaking. Essays on the Treaty of Trianon* (Boulder and New York: East European Quarterly and Columbia University Press, 1983).

4. This taboo is evident in the most minimal treatment given to the nature of the Treaty of Trianon in Hungarian historical syntheses and in post-1945 historical literature in general. For example, the 1400 page György Ránki et al.,eds., *Magyarország története 1918-1919, 1919-1945* (History of Hungary 1919-1945) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976), devotes only a page (p.303) to the discussion of the Trianon Treaty. The extent of this anti-Trianon taboo is best illustrated by the fate of short and inoffensive article published by historian Károly Vígh on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Trianon: "A trianoni békeszerződés 60. évfordulójára," in *Honismeret*, 8, no. 3 (March 1980): 32-6. As soon as this issue of the periodical appeared, it was promptly withdrawn from circulation and replaced by another version without Vígh's article.

5. Péter Hanák, "Viszonylagos nemzettudat" (Relative national consciousness), in *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Literature), 25, no. 20 (July 25, 1981): 4-5.

6. Ibid.,p.4.

7. In this summary of the history of the Horthy regime I have relied heavily on my own earlier version in Kosáry-Várdy, *History of the Hungarian Nation*, pp. 247-91; and to a lesser degree on István Deák's excellent essay, "Hungary," in Hans Rogger and Eugene Weber, eds., *The European Right. A Historical Profile* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966): 364-407.

8. In one of his most recent articles the noted Hungarian historian György Ránki has also rejected the tendency to equate the Horthy regime with a Fascist system, although he did find "some of the essential elements of Fascism" therein. Even so, Ránki views the Horthy regime primarily as a "conservative autocratic system," which basically rhymes with my own views. Cf. György Ránki, "A német-magyar kapcsolatok néhány problémája, 1933-1944," in *Valóság* (Budapest), 24, no. 9 (September 1981): 1-18; quotation from p. 2.

9. See Szekfű's chapter "Neóbarokk-társadalom" (Neo-Baroque society), in his *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Three generations and what comes after) (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1934): 407-21. On Szekfű see S.B. Várdy, *Hungarian Historiography and the Geistesgeschichte School* (Cleveland: Árpád Academy, 1974), and by the same author, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (Boulder and New York: East European Quarterly and Columbia University Press, 1976): 62-101.

10. On electoral laws and the franchise system in interwar Hungary see Péter Hársfalvi's recent article, "A választójog a polgári Magyarországon" (The franchise system in bourgeois Hungary) in *História* (Budapest), 3, no. 2 (1981): 32-3.

11. On Bethlen's foreign policy see Gyula Juhász, *Magyarország külpolitikája, 1919-1945* (Hungary's Foreign Policy, 1919-1945) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1969), especially chapter II; and Thomas Sakmyster, "István Bethlen and Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1921-1931," *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies*, V, no. 2 (Fall 1978): 3-16.

12. The right wing movements in Hungary were treated by Miklós Laczkó, *Arrow Cross Men, National Socialists, 1935-1944* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968); and by Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and Others*; *The History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1968).

13. Concerning the secret societies see György Borsányi, ed., *Páter Zadravecz titkos*

naplója (The secret diary of Pater Zadravecz) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1967); and Rudolfné Dósa, *A MOVE. Egy jellegzetes magyar fasiszta szervezet, 1918-1945* (The MOVE. A typical Fascist organization, 1918-1945) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972).

14. Concerning Lord Rothermere and the Hungarian Revisionist League see the rather unsympathetic treatment by Dezső Nemes, *A Bethlen kormány külpolitikája, 1927-1931-ben* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1964): 167-224.

15. On these research institutes see S.B. Várdy, "A magyarság összefogásának és tudományos tanulmányozásának kísérlete 1920-tól 1945-ig," (Attempts at the unification and scientific study of the Hungarians between 1920 and 1945), in János Nádas and Ferenc Somogyi, eds., *A XV. Magyar Találkozó krónikája* (Cleveland: Árpád Könyvkiadó, 1976): 239-250; and Dezső Halácsy, *A világ magyarságáért* (For the Hungarians of the world) (Budapest: A szerző kiadása, 1944): 479-507.

16. On Klebelsberg and neo-nationalism see S.B. Vardy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, pp. 50-61; and Ferenc Glatz, "Historiography, Cultural Policy, and the Organization of Scholarship in Hungary in the 1920s," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 16, nos. 3-4 (1970): 273-93.

17. On the shock effect of Trianon upon Hungarian historians see Ferenc Glatz, "Der Zusammenbruch der Habsburger Monarchie und die ungarische Geschichtwissenschaft," *Études Historiques Hongroises 1980*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), II: 575-92; and S.B. Várdy, "Trianon in Interwar Hungarian Historiography."

18. Gyula Szekfű, *A magyar állam életrajza* (The biography of the Hungarian state) (Budapest: Dick Manó Könyvkereskedése, 1917; 2nd ed., 1923); and its German version: Julius Szekfű, *Der Staat Ungarn. Eine Geschichtsstudie* (Stuttgart-Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1918).

19. Cf. Dénes Némedi, "A Magyar Szemle revíziós nacionalizmusának szerkezetéről," (On the structure of the revisionist nationalism of the *Magyar Szemle*) *Történelmi Szemle*, 15, nos. 1-2 (1972): 75-110.

20. Szekfű, *A magyar állam életrajza*, p. 222.

21. Ibid., pp. 204-5.

22. Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű, *Magyar történet* (Magyar History), 8 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Egyetemi Nyomda, 1928-1934); subsequent editions all appeared in five volumes.

23. On the influence of revisionism, neo-nationalism, and Szekfű's views on interwar Hungarian history textbooks see Mátyás Unger, *A történelmi tudat alakulása középiskolai történelemtankönyveinkben* (The development of historical consciousness in our history textbooks for secondary schools), (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1976): 87-196.

24. In reporting to his government concerning Hungarian reaction to the establishment of the Rome-Berlin Axis in 1936, the French ambassador to Hungary, Maugras, referred to this phenomenon as follows: "There is no question that the minds of these people (the Hungarians) are filled with a certain troubadour spirit, for they are prone to view political realities from a romantic point of view. They willingly put themselves forth as the defenders of European Christianity, and believe that henceforth they will continue their Christian crusade in partnership with Italy and Germany." Quoted by György Ránki in his "A német-magyar kapcsolatok néhány problémája," p. 7.

25. On this strange phenomenon of Turanism in interwar Hungary see Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik*, pp. 480-92; Joseph E. Kessler, *Turanism and Pan-Turanism in Hungary, 1890-1945* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967); and S.B. Vardy, *The Ottoman Empire in European Historiography; A Re-Evaluation by Sándor Takáts* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Studies in History, 1976), reprinted from *Turkish Review*, 2, no. 9 (1972): 1-16.

26. This question of Hungary's position as an "unwilling satellite" (as claimed by Ambassador Montgomery) versus her position as the "last satellite" (as asserted by postwar Marxist historians in Hungary) was examined recently by György Ránki in his already cited article, "A német-magyar kapcsolatok néhány problémája." Concerning John Flournoy Montgomery's views, who was the last American ambassador to Hungary prior to World War II, see his *Hungary the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1947).

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Peaceful Revision: The Diplomatic Road to War

Eva S. Balogh

Anyone dealing with Hungarian foreign policy between the wars must dwell, however tedious it may be for his audience, on an old topic Hungarian revisionism and its relation to Hungary's eventual fate during and after the Second World War. Whether one accepts or rejects the view that the revision of the Treaty of Trianon was the *sine qua non* of the nation's "survival and independent existence," [1] the fact remains that revisionism was the cornerstone of Hungarian interwar foreign policy. The government made no secret of its ultimate goal on the contrary, it preached the gospel of revisionism to anyone who would listen, repeating its message so often and with such fervor that many Westerners soon became convinced that "the Hungarian people were not quite sane on that subject." [2]

The zeal with which Hungary promoted the cause of revisionism was commensurate with the difficulty of the undertaking. István Bethlen, the man who laid the foundation of Hungarian interwar foreign policy, did not exaggerate when he claimed that although "this nation had gone through many catastrophes, never in her history did she face such a formidable task as the question of revision." [3] The obstacles in the way of revising the Treaty of Trianon were enormous: the opposition of those who had benefited from the reorganization of East-Central Europe in 1919, the Great Powers' antagonism towards or lack of sympathy for the Hungarian demands, and Hungary's relative insignificance in economic, military and diplomatic terms. Without a general territorial reshuffle of the whole region between the borders of Germany and Russia, Hungarian revisionism did not have the slightest chance of success.

As peace began to give way to war, however, revision became a more realistic goal. The obstacles which had formerly blocked Hungary's revisionist path were no longer insurmountable, and the futile rhetoric of the past could now be replaced by

diplomatic maneuvering. Hungarian policy-makers took full advantage of the new situation. Spurred on by early diplomatic triumphs, they relentlessly pursued their revisionist aims. The result was total failure after the war the victorious Allies reimposed the same borders (with one minor change, and that to Hungary's detriment) which had been so odious to her in 1918 and which she had tried to change for more than two decades. The reason for this failure, it will be argued, was not that revisionism was an intrinsically mistaken notion necessarily leading to disaster. The problem was rather that Hungarian policy makers, obsessed with the desire to recover Transylvania, went beyond the limits of prudence and common sense.

When Bethlen began his active foreign policy in 1927 by signing the Italian-Hungarian treaty of friendship, he already believed that any reorganization of East Central Europe would most likely be affected by Germany and Italy.[4] He did not, however, foresee that Italy's foreign policy would become increasingly adjusted to that of Germany and that Hungarian politicians would be confronted with a Germany which could—virtually single-handedly—redraw the map of Eastern Europe. The long-awaited opportunity for a major reorganization of the area seemed to be on hand, but, at the same time, the danger of German penetration into Eastern Europe was very real. The revision of the Trianon Treaty, always a complex problem, now seemed to be even more intricate given the nature of Germany's new regime and Hitler's ambitions for the *Lebensraum*. The question was how long Hungary could, as C.A. Macartney stated it, "pluck for herself the fruits which Germany's growing power brought within her reach, while escaping the dangers."[5]

Between November 1938 and April 1941, Hungary took full advantage of German patronage and, in four different stages, doubled her size. Ethnically, these acquisitions were a mixed bag. Some were populated mostly by Hungarians. Others, such as Ruthenia, were almost wholly non-Hungarian in composition, while still others (for instance, partitioned Transylvania) had such a mixed population that any ethnic claim was dubious at best. Although important as far as world opinion at that time was concerned, the ethnic composition of these territories was not the determining factor in their final fate. As the second Paris Peace Conference proved, national self-determination could be

ignored as easily in 1946 as it had been in 1919. A favorable revision of Hungary's borders hinged, first, on the success of her foreign policy and, second, on the power relations affecting the small nations of East Central Europe.

Hungary's revisionist drive began auspiciously enough. Although the First Viennese Award was the result of Italian-German arbitration and not of the four-power guarantee which had originally been envisaged, the British government tacitly recognized the award as binding. In fact, the Foreign Office "received the news of it with satisfaction and even relief."[6] The new Hungarian-Czechoslovak border devised by Germany and Italy was a bit more generous to Hungary than it should have been on the basis of strict observance of nationality, yet the ceded areas had an overwhelming Hungarian majority. Moreover, the British had already opposed the acquisition of the Csallóköz by Czechoslovakia in 1919, and the outdated strategic considerations invoked at that time to justify the border change were quite absurd by the late 1930s.

With the outbreak of the war, Hungary's prospects for retaining the ceded Slovak territories looked even brighter. While the newly-created Slovakia became a vassal state of Germany and eagerly took part in the Polish campaign, Hungary, to the great satisfaction of the West, remained neutral. As a result, sympathy towards Budapest, conspicuously absent earlier, began to grow both in Great Britain and in France. British diplomats, for example, repeatedly announced that "the British government did not tie herself to Mr. Benes' plans (concerning the restoration of Czechoslovakia) and (that) the main goal of the war...(was) to achieve a lasting peace based on solid foundations," thereby indicating that a Czechoslovakia reestablished within its former borders was not considered to be conducive to peaceful conditions in the area. The French attitude, although on the surface warmer to Benes, was essentially similar to that of Britain.[7]

Hungary's second territorial adjustment, the annexation of Ruthenia by independent military action, was a different situation altogether. On the basis of self-determination of nations, Hungary had no valid claim to the area since the majority of the population in Ruthenia was of Ukrainian stock and spoke dialects of Ukrainian. The lasting nature of this particular acquisition therefore depended entirely on the future

military and diplomatic status of the Soviet Union. At the time, however, the annexation was greeted with a certain amount of sympathy in the West. [8] After the German occupation of Prague, both Slovakia and Ruthenia had declared their independence, and it was expected that both countries would soon become obedient servants of the German Reich. Slovakia fulfilled the expectations of the West, and Ruthenia, economically dominated by Germany, seemed headed in the same direction. The Hungarian action, which Germany had earlier opposed and which she now endorsed only grudgingly, advanced Allied interests. It prevented the creation of another German satellite and, by the same stroke, brought about a common border between Poland and Hungary.

While the first two territorial acquisitions were defensible at the time and likely to be accepted by Western public opinion later, the third border revision between Rumania and Hungary, sanctioned by German-Italian arbitration, marked the beginning of "an impossible situation," as Prime Minister Pál Teleki later realized. [9] In spite of warnings from London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin, Budapest diplomats spent most of their energies on the Transylvanian question. Official statements to the effect that the question of Transylvania had to be settled "under any circumstances and at any price," indicated that, in spite of a very volatile international situation, the Hungarian foreign ministry was bent on an early diplomatic solution to an insoluble problem. [10] Critics of this policy within Hungary—most notably, former Prime Minister István Bethlen, the chief architect of the doctrine of peaceful revision and himself a Transylvanian, and Kálmán Kánya, former foreign minister and the man responsible for Hungary's first successful revision—warned the government that the course it was pursuing was not only dangerous but also counter-productive. For the sake of a permanent and satisfactory arrangement, they argued, the Transylvanian question had to be shelved. Instead of a belligerent and antagonistic policy towards Rumania, Bethlen and Kánya suggested a *rapprochement* between the two countries. [11] But the government persisted with its plans to regain Transylvania.

In the wake of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, the Hungarian government feared a Russian move against Rumania, either in conjunction with a similar move by Germany or in

defiance of Germany's interests. The details of the German-Soviet secret protocol were, of course, not known at the time, but both the Rumanians and Hungarians had a fair idea of its sinister bearings on the fate of Bessarabia. There was, for instance, the chance that a deal existed between Russia and Germany with a view to partitioning Rumania on the Polish model. In that case, Hungary would have found herself in the centre of the German orbit. A contrary possibility—i.e., a Russian-German falling out over Russia's future role in the Balkans, was no better: this would have resulted in war and, consequently, in the German occupation of Hungary. And if Russia attacked Rumania and Rumania resisted, Germany again would have marched through Hungary in order to defend the oil wells which the Rumanians had threatened to destroy. The only promising solution, to which the Russians often alluded, was an Italian-German-Russian settlement of the whole Rumanian question. Since the Russians were sympathetic if not encouraging towards the Bulgarian and Hungarian claims, an arbitration by the three powers, given later developments, might have saved some of Hungary's new acquisitions after the war. But the Germans ignored the Russian scheme.

In the meantime, the Hungarians were growing increasingly impatient to press their territorial claims against Rumania. But they met only resistance. The Western Allies, as during earlier diplomatic crises, argued that Hungary should do nothing. Neither France nor Great Britain wanted the extension of the war into the Balkans, and therefore they tried to persuade Hungary to postpone territorial revisions in the East until the end of the hostilities. [12] This time the Germans and the Italians also warned Hungary against reckless adventures in Southeastern Europe. The Italians gave friendly advice and tried to calm both Budapest and Bucharest. Ciano simply could not understand that "a country like Hungary, preoccupied with the German danger, (did) not seem to be able to see the danger of aggravating the crisis with Rumania, toward which the most dangerous ambitions of Berlin seem(ed) to point." [13] For the time being, however, German ambitions in Rumania remained dormant. As long as the generous supply of Rumanian oil flowed freely to the German Reich, Hitler had no intention of upsetting the *status quo* in this area. The Germans therefore told Foreign Minister Csáky to do absolutely nothing to disturb the tranquility of Southeastern Europe. [14]

Under these conditions, Hungary decided not to move against Rumania. Yet Rumania was not convinced of Hungarian sincerity. During the winter of 1939-1940, Rumanian conscript workers died by the hundreds in a frantic effort to build a line of fortification against Hungary which Bucharest wits rightly or wrongly called the "Imaginescu" line.[15] In return, the Hungarians mobilized two divisions and stationed them near the Rumanian-Hungarian border. It was a period of watchful waiting.

The uneasy calm was disturbed in April 1940 when the Hungarians heard from a reliable source that Germany planned to occupy the rest of Rumania in the event of a Russian move into Bessarabia.[16] Although the information was incorrect and Hitler sternly told the Hungarians to bide their time,[17] diplomats in Budapest became increasingly fearful of a German occupation of Rumania. They went so far as to ask Rome whether they could count on Italian help in case they put up armed resistance to Germany. The answer, of course, was negative.[18] They also put out feelers in Great Britain, but the initial British reaction was also discouraging. London told Budapest in no uncertain terms that the British government believed neither in Hungary's military potential nor in her willingness to stand against the German flood.[19] By May, however, the British Foreign Office became more cordial. While British diplomats made it clear that Hungarian cooperation with Germany would have very serious repercussions, they promised that if Hungary protested the German move across her territory, even if this action were followed by the establishment of a Hungarian Quisling government, Hungary would be placed in the same position which Denmark occupied *vis a vis* the Allies. If the Regent and the government went into exile, Hungary's chances of receiving favorable treatment after the war would be good.[20]

At the end of May, impressed with the rapid German advances westward and fearing an early end to the hostilities, Stalin and Molotov decided to cash in their promissory note from Germany. On June 26 the Soviet government handed an ultimatum to the Rumanian minister in Moscow and demanded the cession of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. Rumania, after ascertaining that no assistance was forthcoming from any other powers, had no choice but to submit.

At this point, Hungary made her first diplomatic mistake. She pressed Germany for the "fulfillment of her justified demands on Rumania."[21] In return for such a favor, Foreign Minister Csáky was "ready to grant Germany free traffic through Hungary."[22] The Hungarian territorial claims and her threatening talks of military action against Rumania met with extreme German displeasure. If Hungary moved militarily, Germany once again repeated, she would not only be abandoned, she would be severely punished.[23] After the German rebuff, the Hungarians gave up the idea of war, but they still pressed for a diplomatic solution.

Both Great Britain and the Soviet Union responded generously to Hungary's diplomatic efforts. After July 2, when Rumania repudiated the British guarantee and moved over to the Axis camp, Great Britain no longer minded a "peaceful solution of territorial questions between Rumania and Hungary."[24] The Soviet Union, being eager to have a hand in the future reorganization of the Balkans, also declared to the Hungarians that their territorial demands were justified and that the Soviet government was ready "to support these claims at a possible future peace conference."[25] Hungary needed little encouragement, and soon direct Rumanian-Hungarian negotiations began. In view of the extravagant Hungarian demands and the Rumanian unwillingness to satisfy them these negotiations were bound to fail. With the breakdown of the negotiations, Germany, determined to preserve peace for the time being in Southeastern Europe, stepped in to arbitrate.

The Transylvanian case was radically different from that of Slovakia: there could be no diplomatic solution to the territorial differences between Hungary and Rumania. As István Bethlen noted in March 1940, "a final compromise with Rumania (could) occur only after a victorious war," and even then only within the framework of a federal solution.[26] The Second Viennese Award was unsatisfactory both from the Rumanian and from the Hungarian point of view. The crux of the matter was that there was no such thing as a fair division of the disputed territories. More important, the Second Viennese Award alienated both the British and the Soviet governments. Although the British did not mind a peaceful solution to the Rumanian-Hungarian dispute, they very much minded the German-Italian arbitration. Although the Soviets considered some of the Hungarian demands

just, they were greatly annoyed by the obvious German determination to exclude the Soviet Union from the affairs of the Balkans. Hungary's short-term victory in Vienna did not bode well for the future.

As C.A. Macartney noted, Prime Minister Teleki did not "always possess an entirely sure political instinct...His Transylvanian ancestry and his studies had embued him with a fixed belief that the only possible policy for Hungary was one of "balance"."[27] During the Rumanian-Hungarian crisis either he did not realize that this policy was no longer viable, or more likely, he came to the conclusion that after the great victory of the German armies in the West there would be nothing to balance. While in March 1940 he had made preparations for the establishment of an émigré government in case of need, in May he changed his mind and instructed the Hungarian minister in Washington to return the five million dollars deposited in New York for this purpose.[28] Perhaps along with many others, he underestimated the Allied determination to fight Germany. In any case, his decision to press for territorial adjustments at the expense of Rumania deeply indebted Hungary to Germany. Shortly after the territorial settlement in Vienna, Berlin launched its request for the transportation of German troops through Hungary on their way to Rumania, and naturally the request had to be granted. A few months later Hungary rushed to adhere to the Tripartite Agreement which eventually committed Hungary to war with the United States. Hungary was rapidly drifting into the German camp. The Yugoslav events of the following spring, gaining Hungary her fourth border revision and usually interpreted as the watershed in Allied-Hungarian relations, were only the logical extension of erroneous diplomatic decisions made during the previous summer.

NOTES

1. István Bethlen, "Előszó" (Foreword), *Bethlen István gróf beszédei és írásai* (The writings and speeches of Count István Bethlen) 2 vols. (Budapest: Genius, 1933) 1: 12.

2. John F. Montgomery, *Hungary; the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1947): 54.

3. Bethlen, "A békerevizió gyakorlati politikája. A Revíziós Liga Nagygyűlése, 1932. május 22 " (Practical politics of peace treaty revision. The conference of the Revisionist League, May 22, 1932) *Bethlen István gróf beszédei*, 2: 375.

4. Bethlen was also certain that sooner or later Austria would join Germany. During his trip to Rome in April 1927, he learned that Mussolini shared his views concerning an *Anschluss* and, what is more important, saw "no instrument which could prevent such an outcome." Bethlen's notes on his conversation with Mussolini, April 4, 1927, Hungary

Országos Levéltár, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez*, 1919-1945, (Documents to the history of the counter-revolution) ed. Dezső Nemes and Elek Karsai, 4 vols. (Budapest: Szikra, Kossuth, 1953-1967) 4: 51.

5. C.A. Macartney, *Hungary; A Short History* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1962): 226-7.

6. Barcza MS quoted in Macartney, *October Fifteenth; A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1957) 1: 303.

7. For the British attitude see Barcza to Csáky, September 5, 1939; Barcza to Csáky, November 23, 1939; for the French reaction see Khuen-Héderváry to Csáky, September 25, 1939, Hungary, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Történettudományi Intézet, *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához, 1936-1945*, (Diplomatic documents to Hungary's external affairs, 1936-1945) ed. László Zsigmond, ed. (Budapest: Akadémia, 1962-) 4: 491-2, 628, and 541. Henceforth cited as *DIMK*.

8. Barcza to Csáky, March 18, 1939; Barcza to Csáky, March 19, 1939; Pelényi to Csáky, March 31, 1939, *DIMK* 3: 614-6, 619, 684-6.

9. Richard V. Burks, "Two Teleki Letters," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 7 (1947): 69.

10. Béla Vágó, "Le second dictate de Vienne: Les preliminaires," *East European Quarterly* 2 (1969): 426.

11. Memorandum by István Bethlen on the probable peace conditions, no date but received in the Foreign Ministry on March 23, 1940, *DIMK* 4: 743-61.

12. See Barcza to Csáky, February 9, 1940, *DIMK* 4: 693-7, and Andorka to Csáky, March 6, 1940, ibid., p. 272.

13. September 26, 1939, Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943* (New York: Doubleday, 1946): 151.

14. Ribbentrop to Erdmannsdorff, September 8, 1939, Germany, Auswartiges Amt, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series C and D, 18 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949-1966) D: 8: 29-30. Henceforth cited as *DGFP D*.

15. Robert L. Wolff, *The Balkans in Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967): 192.

16. Draft of a memorandum to the British government, no date (most likely early April 1940), *DIMK* 4: 769-70. See also April 8, 1940, *Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943*, p. 223.

17. Hitler to Teleki, May 14, 1940, *DGFP D*: 9: 372-4.

18. April 9, 1940, Ciano, *Diaries, 1939-1943*, p. 234.

19. Barcza to Csáky, April 20 and April 22, 1940, Országos Levéltár, Szentiványi kézirat, pp. 73-4 and 450, quoted in Gyula Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája 1939-1941* (The external relations of the Teleki government), (Budapest: Akademia, 1964): 109.

20. Barcza MS quoted in Macartney, *October Fifteenth* 1: 400; see also Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány*, pp. 108-10.

21. Memorandum by Ernst Woermann, Director of the Political Department, June 27, 1940, *DGFP D*: 10: 38-9.

22. Carl Clodius and Otto van Erdmannsdorff to Foreign Ministry, June 28, 1940, ibid., pp. 56-7.

23. Ribbentropp to Foreign Ministry, July 1, 1940, ibid., pp. 85-6.

24. Barcza to Csáky, July 2, 1940 quoted in Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány*, p. 139.

25. Kristóffy to Csáky, July 4, 1940, quoted in ibid., p. 128.

26. Memorandum by István Bethlen on the probable peace conditions, no date but received in the Foreign Ministry on March 23, 1940, *DIMK* 4: 754.

27. Macartney, *October Fifteenth* 1: 225.

28. For the details of this episode see John Pelényi, "The Secret Plan for a Hungarian Government in the West at the Outbreak of World War II," *The Journal of Modern History* 36 (1964): 170-7.

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The Search for a Casus Belli and the Origins of the Kassa Bombing

Thomas Sakmyster

By early 1945 when most political observers in Europe realized that the defeat of Nazi Germany was imminent, all of Germany's former wartime allies had either declared neutrality or defected to the Allies. In fact, by this time only one country remained loyal to Hitler's Germany: Hungary. Even as the Red Army moved inexorably through Hungary, and even as Budapest was abandoned by the Hungarian government led by Ferenc Szálasi, Hungary still did not separate its fate from that of Germany. Only the final collapse of Hungary's military forces in Austria brought an end to the German-Hungarian wartime alliance. It is perhaps appropriate, then, to suggest that Hungary has to bear the ignominious title of Nazi Germany's "last satellite." [1]

By the same token, it can be argued that Hungary was also Nazi Germany's first ally. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Gyula Gömbös, was the first foreign leader to honour him with a visit. Until the Italian-German rapprochement after 1936, Hungary's ties with Berlin were more cordial than that of any other European state.

It is clear, however, that these elements of the German-Hungarian relationship from 1933 to 1945 do not tell the whole story. Indeed, a former American ambassador to Hungary, J.F. Montgomery, wrote a book after the war that referred to Hungary as the "unwilling satellite," and many historians and chroniclers of interwar Hungary have adopted this thesis. [2] According to this view, Hungary was by no means an eager and willing accomplice of Hitler. Most Hungarian leaders, in fact, regarded Hitler as a vulgar, despicable man and Nazism as an abhorrent ideology. They agreed to cooperate on a limited basis with Hitler only because the Western Powers refused to consider revision of what Hungarians regarded as the totally unfair and unwise territorial provisions of the peace settlement after World War I.

According to this view, successive governments of the late 1930s and early war years were far from loyal allies of Hitler. They refused to join in aggressive action against Czechoslovakia in 1938 and acted honourably toward Poland in 1939. Moreover, during the war Hungary was the least reliable of Germany's satellites, constantly arousing Hitler's suspicions and anger. Not only was Hungary's military contribution kept to a minimum, but despite intensive pressure from Berlin, Hungary, in the heart of German controlled Europe, continued until 1944 to treat Jews with relative tolerance and to preserve certain elements of liberalism and parliamentarianism. This, it has been argued, hardly describes an obsequious, loyal ally of Nazi Germany, but rather a country that, given its geographic location and understandable zeal for a change in the territorial status quo, acted honourably and at times even thwarted Hitler's foreign and domestic programs.

"Unwilling satellite" or "last satellite?" As is the case with so many historical problems, there is truth in both these descriptions. The fact is that Hungarian society was deeply convulsed by the question of how to deal with Hitler's Germany. Many Hungarians were strongly attracted to the Third Reich, firmly believing that it would be victorious in the war, and they thus remained fanatically loyal to the bitter end. At the opposite pole were those Hungarians who, for a variety of reasons, viewed Nazi Germany with great distrust and even contempt. Many were convinced that Germany would not win the war. They thus struggled, as best they could in the circumstances, to ensure that Hungary's fate would not become entwined with that of Germany. These views were predominant among those conservative statesmen who occupied most of the highest positions of the Hungarian government in the late 1930s and the war years.

Perhaps the portion of Hungarian society in which pro-German and pro-Nazi sentiments were most pronounced was the officer corps. During the interwar period close ties were maintained between the Hungarian and German officer corps. They had fought "shoulder to shoulder" in World War I and looked forward to collaboration in a future war aimed at destroying the status quo and fulfilling the territorial aspirations of their two countries. These feelings of comradeship and a shared destiny were not appreciably diminished by Hitler's

coming to power in 1933. Some of the more traditional and conservative Hungarian officers were wary of intimate cooperation with Hitler's Germany but in the officer corps there was a growing general conviction that alliance with Nazi Germany was the only path to the restoration of a powerful, prosperous Hungary.[3] A handful of these officers were so eager to promote Hungary's linking up with the Third Reich that from 1938 on into the early stages of World War II they actively searched for a suitable *casus belli* that would draw Hungary into the conflict on Germany's side.

In his memoirs, Admiral Miklós Horthy, Hungary's head of state in the interwar period, asserted that Hungary's entry into World War II had been provoked by a staged bombing of the Hungarian city of Kassa carried out by German pilots. General Henrik Werth, the Hungarian Chief of Staff, who had been pressing the government to join in Hitler's campaign against Soviet Russia, was, according to Horthy, an "interested party" in the conspiracy.[4] This theory was accepted by many other members of Hungary's interwar conservative nationalist establishment. At the same time, and somewhat surprisingly, the conspiracy theory has also received wide, indeed nearly unanimous, support from Marxist historians of contemporary Hungary. In the one volume history of Hungary prepared by the most prominent historians in Hungary today, it is stated without equivocation that the bombing of Kassa was planned by the German and Hungarian general staffs in order to draw Hungary into the war.[5]

This is surely one of the rare instances in which Marxist historians have fully embraced one of Admiral Horthy's interpretations of an event in modern Hungarian history. This curious state of affairs becomes explicable when one recognizes the utility of the conspiracy theory for these ideological opponents. For defenders of the Horthy regime, and for Horthy himself, it provided a convenient way to transfer responsibility for Hungary's entry into the war away from the Hungarian government to the devious Nazi Germans and to certain unpatriotic Hungarian military officers, many of whom were of German ethnic background. Those historians of Socialist Hungary who have dealt with the Kassa bombing have laboured under another kind of restraint. They could not suggest that the bombers had in fact been Soviet, for this would malign the Soviet

Union, which has always denied responsibility for the bombing.

Supporters of the conspiracy theory have thus spanned the ideological spectrum. Yet, despite the wide acceptance of this theory, the supporting evidence has been surprisingly meagre. No official German or Hungarian government document relating to the alleged conspiracy has been uncovered. Moreover, if there was a conspiracy, everyone on both the German and Hungarian sides kept his silence during and after the war. No one ever stepped forward to admit complicity in the Kassa bombing at the postwar trials in Nuremberg and in Hungary, or in biographical sources. Thus, the theory of a conspiracy has rested largely on the testimony of three individuals. One was Ádám Krúdy, a Hungarian military officer who emerged after the war as the most famous eyewitness of the bombing. Krúdy asserted that the bombing was carried out by the Germans in aircraft that bore Axis markings. There are major inconsistencies in Krúdy's testimony, however, and in recent years his assertions have been discredited by several investigators, including Julián Borsányi and Nándor Dreisziger. [6]

The conspiracy theory has also rested in part on the testimony of two military intelligence officers, Rudolf Bamler, a high-ranking member of the German intelligence agency, the Abwehr, during the early stages of World War II, and István Újszászy, who in 1941 was head of military intelligence on the Hungarian General Staff. Újszászy was interrogated while in Soviet custody after the war. An alleged transcript of his statements pertaining to the Kassa bombing was submitted as evidence at the Nuremberg Trials. Újszászy stated flatly that certain German and Hungarian officers had manufactured the incident at Kassa in order to provoke Hungary to declare war. Újszászy's testimony, however, did not provide any convincing specific evidence. It is apparent that he did not have any first-hand knowledge of a conspiracy, and that his assertion was merely a hunch based on the suspicious behaviour of some of his colleagues. In any case, the reliability of his testimony is reduced by the nature of his interrogation, which may have been under duress. [7]

The testimony of Rudolf Bamler, who in 1939 was head of counterintelligence in the Abwehr, must also be treated with caution. At an East German historical conference in 1957, Bamler, himself not a historian, spoke about the role of German

military intelligence in the coming of World War II. As an example of the invidious activities of the Abwehr, Bamler referred briefly to the bombing of Kassa, which, he claimed, was arranged by the Abwehr in order to persuade the Hungarians to enter the war. Bamler made no mention of the participation of Hungarian officers in the conspiracy, although he did make the remarkable accusation that the President of Slovakia, Jozef Tiso, was aware of and abetted the conspiracy. [8] Bamler offered no documentation to support his assertions. Since Bamler in 1941 was no longer assigned to the Abwehr (he was the commander of an artillery regiment) it is unlikely that he was involved in the alleged conspiracy. It is possible that his story was based on information he had gained from his Abwehr colleagues, but this is merely a supposition, since neither at the historical conference nor later did Bamler elaborate on his brief and cryptic references to the Kassa bombing.

The theory of a German-Hungarian conspiracy has thus rested on a weak foundation of evidence, and in recent years some of the historians most interested in the Kassa controversy have discarded it as a likely explanation. Even in Hungary some historians have ventured to suggest that this traditional theory is flawed by inconsistencies and questionable supporting evidence. [9] Despite this historiographical trend, the purpose of this paper is to argue that the conspiracy theory remains both viable and plausible. Although startling new evidence bearing on the alleged conspiracy has not been uncovered, there exists certain intriguing circumstantial evidence bearing on the possible role of Hungarian officers in a plot to create a *casus belli* for Hungary's entry into the war. On the basis of this evidence it is possible to conclude not that Hungarian officers definitely helped stage a provocation at Kassa, but that certain of them were quite willing to do so and in fact had urged the Germans to create such a provocation on two separate occasions before June, 1941. To demonstrate this, one need not rely on the testimony of Krúdy, Újszászy, or Bamler.

In the past one of the weaknesses of the conspiracy theory has been the inability of investigators to discover any Hungarian officers who could be specifically linked with a conspiracy. Several individuals have been mentioned, but no convincing evidence has ever been uncovered. If there was a conspiracy, it has been argued, surely some Hungarian officers would have

been collaborating with German officials in Budapest. Two prominent German representatives in wartime Budapest, General Fütterer, the air attaché, and Otto von Erdmannsdorf, the diplomatic minister, have both denied in a convincing way any knowledge of a conspiracy hatched in Budapest. Skeptics also argue that a plot of this kind would have required that a large number of Hungarian officers participate. In interwar Hungary even the most confidential information had a way of spreading quite rapidly through informal channels. It seems inconceivable that a conspiracy on the scale of the Kassa bombing could have been kept a secret in Budapest not only during the war but up to today.

This phenomenon can be explained, however, if one assumes that the alleged conspiracy was carried out by only a handful of Hungarians and Germans skilled in military intelligence, and that the plot was devised and coordinated not in Budapest but in Berlin. The two most prominent Hungarian officials in Berlin in June, 1941 were Col. Sándor Homlok, the military attaché, and Döme Sztójay, a former General Staff officer who had been Hungary's minister to Germany since 1936. These two individuals may be regarded as prime suspects in the search for the Kassa bombing conspirators.

In the two decades before 1941, Sztójay and Homlok helped set the stage for close military cooperation with Germany. Their special area of expertise was military intelligence. Before 1918 Sztójay had been an intelligence expert assigned to the Habsburg General Staff in Vienna. His experience was put to good use in Hungary after the war, when Sztójay helped to establish an independent intelligence service and became its first director. From 1927 he served as military attaché in Berlin, where he fostered his personal ties with Germany's military élite. The culmination of his efforts was an important secret agreement signed by the German and Hungarian general staffs in 1932. It called for a coordination of German and Hungarian intelligence gathering operations, particularly with regard to Czechoslovakia as a likely opponent of the two countries.[10] From this point on German and Hungarian cooperation in intelligence matters was intensive. Nazi Germany did not ever establish such a frank and intimate relationship with any other country for the exchange of military intelligence.

In 1936 Sztójay was appointed Hungarian Minister in Berlin.

By this time he was fully convinced that Hungary's salvation lay in the closest cooperation, indeed even alliance, with the Third Reich. Sztójay felt increasingly frustrated, however, by the refusal of the civilian government, especially the Foreign Minister, Kálmán Kánya, to make any direct commitment to Hitler's Germany. Sztójay was so convinced of the validity of his views that he was willing to deviate from official Hungarian policy in certain matters and pursue his own policies. His deviations were encouraged by his friends on the Hungarian General Staff, to whom he reported regularly. As Europe edged toward a crisis in 1937 and 1938, Sztójay was working secretly behind the scenes, without the knowledge or approval of his superiors in Budapest, to convince the Germans that Hungary could and would participate in a joint action against Czechoslovakia. Whenever possible he pressed for German-Hungarian military staff talks to prepare for such a campaign. [11]

Sztójay's frustration over the circumspection of Hungary's civilian government was shared by many of his fellow military officers. By 1937 it was generally believed in the Hungarian General Staff that renewed war was certain and that a powerfully rearmed Germany was bound to emerge victorious in such a conflict. It was thus imperative that Hungary link its destiny to that of Germany before it was too late. Discontent in the General Staff was so great that in early 1938 serious thought was given to toppling Hungary's parliamentary system and installing a military dictatorship. [12] Prominent among these discontented officers was Col. Homlok, who during 1938 and 1939 was a general staff officer active in various matters relating to military intelligence and surreptitious activities of all kinds.

Homlok was able to establish close personal ties with high-ranking Abwehr officials, including Admiral Canaris. [13] As the crisis over Czechoslovakia heated up in the late summer of 1938, Homlok apparently was searching for a way to persuade his government to overcome its hesitations and join wholeheartedly in a German attack on Czechoslovakia. During high-level German-Hungarian talks in late August, however, Regent Miklós Horthy rejected Hitler's offer of a joint military campaign to dismember Czechoslovakia. It was in the aftermath of those dramatic talks that Homlok called on Col. Hellmuth Groscurth, head of Section 2 of the Abwehr, in Berlin on September 1. After asserting that Hungary in principle wished to join in the attack on

Czechoslovakia, Homlok made the following statement, which is recorded in Groscurth's diary: "The Hungarian Chief of Staff requests the creation of a *casus belli* for an attack on Czechoslovakia by the dropping of Czech bombs on Hungarian territory by German aircraft after seizure of the first Czech airports. The Hungarians wish to determine the timing of the bombing."[14]

It is certain that Homlok's request was made without knowledge of the civilians in the Hungarian government. Whether the Hungarian Chief of Staff, Jenő Rátz, had in fact authorized Homlok's approach to the Abwehr is unknown. No other mention of Homlok's initiative can be found in any other German or Hungarian document. It should be noted that Groscurth, who secretly opposed Hitler's aggressive policies, seemed to regard Homlok's plan as a verification of his suspicion that the Hungarian government did not want to join in the campaign against Czechoslovakia. Of course, events in September, 1938 proceeded in such a way that the opportunity for the Abwehr to fulfill Homlok's request did not arise.

Later in 1938 and early 1939 Homlok continued to pursue projects that directly impinged on Hungarian foreign policy. In the fall he presided over the attempt to infiltrate Hungarian guerrilla bands into Slovakia and Ruthenia in order to create disturbances and turmoil, thus setting the stage for the entry of Hungarian troops to restore order.[15] Homlok soon gained a reputation for ruthlessness and a willingness to use unorthodox and even illegal methods. There is some evidence to suggest that he engineered a series of provocations along the Slovak border in January, 1939, which greatly inflamed Hungary's relations with Czechoslovakia. These provocations failed to produce the desired result, namely Hungarian seizure of Slovakia, and among more moderate Hungarian officials Homlok was coming into disrepute as an irresponsible adventurer.[16]

Later in 1939 Homlok was appointed military attaché in Berlin. After the outbreak of the war he joined Sztójay in pressing the government in Budapest to abandon its neutrality and align itself with Germany in the war. A critical junction was reached in the spring of 1941, when Hitler decided to send his armies into Yugoslavia and urged Hungary to join in the attack. In their eagerness to seize this opportunity, Hungary's military leaders strongly recommended full cooperation with Germany.

The suicide of Pál Teleki, the Prime Minister, who opposed militant action, made the officers even more desperate. How could they overcome the shock over Teleki's suicide and persuade the Regent and Cabinet to accept Hitler's offer? A strategy was adopted to ask the Germans to create a suitable *casus belli* for Hungary, perhaps a Yugoslav provocation on the southern frontier. Such a proposal was presented directly to Hitler on April 4 by Sztójay and the Hungarian Minister of Defense, General Károly Bartha. [17]

It is not known what Hitler's reaction was to this Hungarian proposal. When the German attack began on April 6, however, some bombs were dropped on the Hungarian city of Szeged and elsewhere in southern Hungary by what were reported to be Yugoslav planes. Rumours spread immediately that the bombing was in fact German provocation. [18] No further information about these bombing raids, which bear some resemblance to the attack on Kassa, has been uncovered.

The second great crisis of 1941 came with the German attack on Soviet Russia in June. Sztójay was probably the first Hungarian to learn of the upcoming campaign. During a conversation with Sztójay in late March, Hitler strongly hinted that he had lost patience with the Soviet Union and that a German-Soviet confrontation was not far off. [19] In May, when it became clear that the German invasion was imminent, Sztójay dispatched several reports to Budapest in which he argued that Hungary, which had long enjoyed a reputation as a staunchly anti-communist state, could not possibly stand aside when Hitler's great crusade against Bolshevism began. In fact, Hungary would be well advised to volunteer its assistance beforehand. [20] Homlok argued along similar lines in his own report. [21]

In Budapest similar arguments were being presented by General Werth, the Chief of Staff. The Hungarian Cabinet and even the normally impetuous Regent were not eager, however, to embark on a military campaign that did not seem to have a direct impact on Hungary's national interests. In any case, the Germans were not asking for any major Hungarian assistance. As the Russian campaign unfolded on June 22, Hungary's military leaders were thus highly frustrated and depressed. By the next day, however, the situation had changed dramatically. The Wehrmacht's special representative in Hungary, General Kurt

Himer, now informed Werth that a voluntary offer of support by Hungary would in fact be welcomed by Germany. [22]

The Hungarian government, however, was still reluctant to take any significant military measures against the Soviet Union, and Hitler refused to make a direct request for Hungarian help, since this might eventually lead to Hungarian demands for territorial rewards. A stalemate was thus reached, and the German High Command, aware of the grumbling among the Hungarian officers, took the position that "if the (Hungarian) soldiers want to participate, they should persuade their politicians." [23]

In Berlin Sztójay and Homlok were almost certainly aware of the German military authorities attitude on June 22 and 23. It seems entirely plausible, indeed even likely, that when they were told that the Hungarian officers should persuade their government, Sztójay and Homlok concluded that this could no longer be accomplished through written exhortations. The crisis seemed to call for the kind of bold tactic that had been used by Homlok and Sztójay twice before, in September, 1938 and April, 1941 a request for a German manufactured provocation. It also seems probable that in making such a request Sztójay and Homlok would turn not to Hitler and Ribbentrop (who in any case were inaccessible at the Führer's headquarters), but to their friends in the Abwehr with whom they had worked intimately on many clandestine projects over the years. If this speculation is correct, the plot was thus hatched in Berlin shortly after June 22 and was carried out by Abwehr agents on June 26.

Several objections to this theory might legitimately be raised. For example, why have no official Hungarian or German documents concerning the conspiracy come to light? The answer would be that no such Hungarian documents would exist because the plot was hatched and carried out in Berlin. It may be that no Hungarians other than Sztójay and Homlok were aware of the conspiracy. Perhaps General Werth, the Chief of Staff, simply instructed Homlok to do what he could to persuade the Germans to help create a suitable *casus belli*. This would not have been unprecedented as we have seen, the Hungarian Minister of Defense had made precisely this request of Hitler in April, 1941. Werth may even have assumed the attitude so characteristic of leaders presiding over clandestine and potentially embarrassing operations he may have told Homlok to do what was necessary,

but that he should not report officially on the details of any provocation that was carried out. If this was the case, Werth himself may have been surprised by the bombing of Kassa, and he may not have been certain in his own mind that this was in fact a German provocation. In any case, Sztójay and Homlok would surely have been careful to keep the conspiracy a secret and to communicate with their German counterparts orally rather than in writing. It is also understandable that both men would have kept their terrible secret later in the war and especially after the war. Homlok was certainly capable of concealing the unsavoury projects in which he had participated. Early in the war he was to play a sinister role in a secret plan to gain German cooperation for the expulsion of Jews from Hungary. Homlok's actions served directly to undermine his government's policies and set the stage for the brutal treatment of Hungary's Jews in 1944. Yet Homlok's role in these events was not uncovered after the war, and Homlok carefully kept his silence and escaped any prosecution or notoriety. [24]

The absence of any surviving documentation on the German side can also be explained. The Abwehr was a highly professional organization that of course took rigourous measures to maintain secrecy in its clandestine operations. Those who participated in the conspiracy (the pilots of the bombers, service crew at the airport, etc.) were surely not told all the details of the mission. Probably only a small number of high-ranking Abwehr officers knew the full story, and some or most of them, including Canaris, may have died in the war. It should also be noted that most of the Abwehr's files and archives were destroyed in the war. Thus any written records relating to the Kassa bombing would likely have perished.

There remains a practical question, posed by Julián Borsányi in his book on the Kassa bombing. Could the Germans have planned and carried out the bombing of Kassa in just the few days between June 22 and June 26? [25] The answer is yes. The Abwehr had several posts and no doubt a number of officers and agents in Slovakia. Suitable aircraft of Russian design had been acquired during the seizure of Czechoslovakia in 1939. [26] Surely no more than one day would have been required to secure and prepare the appropriate planes on an airfield under Abwehr jurisdiction in Slovakia. It seems likely that the Abwehr had available reliable pilots who knew the terrain (perhaps Slovak

pilots) and could drop the bombs with some precision once the target was reached. The Abwehr had for some time conducted reconnaissance flights along and even across the Soviet frontier in this area. (Some of these flights apparently originated at a secret Abwehr air base in Hungary near Budapest.)[27]

The conspiracy theory outlined here is based only on circumstantial evidence. It is, however, a plausible explanation to the mystery of the Kassa bombing. Even if someday sensational and convincing new evidence is found that demonstrates that the responsibility for the bombing rests with the Soviet Union, or with the Slovaks or Czechs, it still would be possible to say that there were some Hungarians who were fully capable of instigating such a provocation and had tried to do so even before June, 1941.

NOTES

1. György Ránki, "The Unwilling Satellite or the Last Satellite. Some Problems of Hungarian-German Relations," in *Papers of the First International Conference on Hungarian History* (forthcoming).

2. John Flournoy Montgomery, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: Devin Adair, 1947).

3. For a discussion of the role of Hungary's military officers in political life, see N.F. Dreisziger, "Civil-Military Relations in Nazi Germany's Shadow: The Case of Hungary, 1939-1941," Adrian Preston and Peter Dennis, eds., *Swords and Covenants* (London: Croom Held Ltd., 1976): 216-47; and Thomas L. Sakmyster, "Army Officers and Foreign Policy in Interwar Hungary, 1918-1941," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10, no. 1 (1975): 19-40.

1. Nicholas Horthy, *Memoirs* (New York: Robert Speller, 1957): 190-1.

5. Ervin Pamlényi, ed., *A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1973): 516. A thorough discussion of the evidence for the conspiracy theory is found in György Ránki, "Magyarország belépése a második világháborúba," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 6 (1959): 28-48.

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7. Statement of István Újszászy (Moscow, Jan. 8, 1946), Record Group 238, World War II War Crimes Records, National Archives (Washington), USSR Exhibit- 155.

8. Rudolf Bamler, "Der deutsche militärische Geheimdienst bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Zweiten Weltkrieges," in *Der Zweite Weltkreig, 1939-1945. Wirklichkeit und Falschung* (East Berlin: Komission der Historiker der DDR und USSR, 1959): 101.

9. György Ránki, "Ki bombázta Kassát?" *Élet és Irodalom*, 23, no. 16 (4/21/79): 5.

10. Tibor Hetés and Mrs. Tamás Morva, eds., *Csak szolgálati használatra. Iratok a Horthy-hadsereg történetéhez, 1919-1938* (Budapest: Zrinyi, 1968): 302-12. See also Gustav Hennyey, *Ungarns Schicksal zwischen Ost und West. Lebenserinnerungen* (Mainz: Von Hase and Koehler, 1975): 25-8.

11. See Thomas L. Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis, 1936-1939* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1980): 139, 159.

12. Sakmyster, "Army Officers and Foreign Policy," pp. 27-8.

13. Ladislas Faragó, *The Game of the Foxes. The Untold Story of German Espionage*

in the United States and Great Britain during World War II (New York: David McKay, 1971): 232.

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16. Rudolf Andorka, *A madridi követségtől Mauthausenig. Andorka Rudolf naplója* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1978) pp. 85, 90, 92-3.

17. Vilmos Nagy, *Végzetes esztendők, 1938-1945* (Budapest: Körmendy, n.d.): 65.

18. John A. Lukács, *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* (New York: American Book, 1953): 371.

19. Andreas Hillgruber, ed., *Staatsmanner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard u. Graefe, 1967), 1: 17.

20. Lajos Kerekes et al., eds., *Allianz Hitler-Horthy-Mussolini* (1933-1944) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966), no. 39.

21. For Homlok's report, see László Zsigmond, ed., *Magyarország és a második világháború* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1966), no. 139.

22. Dreisziger, "Civil-Military Relations," p. 238; Mario D. Fenyő, *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary. German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University, 1972): 16-21.

23. Franz Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1963), 3: 6.

24. Randolph L. Braham, "The Holocaust in Hungary: An Historical Interpretation of the Role of the Hungarian Radical Right," *Societas*, 2, no. 3 (Summer, 1972): 198-201.

25. Borsányi, pp. 85, 132-5.

26. Borsányi, p. 135.

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Diplomatic Prelude to the Bombing of Kassa: Reflections and Recollections of a Former Diplomat

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Though several decades have elapsed since the conclusion of the Second World War many pertinent issues remain unsolved. The best-known one is certainly the unfinished mission of Rudolf Hess. On the eve of the German-Russian war, the Hess affair was a momentous German effort to neutralize the West in order to get a free hand against the Soviet Union. But the Hess mission failed of necessity because by May, 1941, Adolf Hitler's Germany had lost its credibility in the eyes of the West. A few weeks later, the bombing of Kassa occurred and joined the series of unsolved mysteries of this greatest human drama. Like the Rudolf Hess mission, the bombing of Kassa is also surrounded by secrecy. Owing to the very nature of such events no authentic sources—written or printed—have surfaced since. It appears to have been planned and executed in complete secrecy as the natural outcome of long and complex diplomatic developments.

On June 4, 1920, the Treaty of Trianon put an end to the existence of historic Hungary. It meant significant territorial losses for the country and roughly 4 million Hungarian became minorities in the successor states. The minority rights of these Hungarians remained unsettled between the wars as the successor states did not ensure equality for their Hungarian subjects. This development caused Hungarians to be preoccupied with revisionism, which became the cornerstone of Hungary's external policy. Anti-Soviet sentiment was also a prime factor in the country's foreign policy orientation. Since Germany found herself in a similar strategic constellation, revisionism and anti-Communism helped to forge a community of interest between German and Hungarian societies. Due to these circumstances, for years elected governments in Hungary misinterpreted the advent of national socialism, starting with the Nazi takeover on February 1, 1933. On that same day, Prime

Minister Gyula Gömbös, formerly a captain on the General Staff, sent an enthusiastic message to Adolf Hitler, and requested closer cooperation between Germany and Hungary in economic as well as foreign policy matters. [1]

Despite Prime Minister Gömbös' desire to establish closer and more cordial relations with Germany, German-Hungarian diplomatic envoys continued to be mutually suspicious of each other even before the 1938 Sudeten crisis when the Hungarian government refused to participate in military action against Czechoslovakia as Germany's ally. On March 7, 1934, Italy, Austria and Hungary concluded the Rome Pact in order to coordinate their political and economic policies. At the time, both Austria and Hungary looked upon Italy as a natural counterweight to Germany's expansionist designs. This idea proved to be a misconceived one since Italy did not have either the military or economic strength to counterbalance German imperialism. Because of Germany's rising power in Central and Eastern Europe, the Rome Pact was unable to block the *Wilhelmstrasse*'s ambitions. As a result, the signatory governments of the Rome Pact soon took Germany's suspicions into consideration and even thought of asking Germany to join the Rome Pact. By doing this the Rome Pact governments admitted that the idea that Italy could serve as a counterweight to Germany was nothing but an empty illusion from the very beginning. [2]

The first major break in German-Hungarian relations occurred in August 1938 as an aftermath of the Bled Conference in Yugoslavia where Hungary and the Little Entente states had just reached an agreement. The Bled Agreement of August 23, 1938, recognized for the first time since the end of the First World War Hungary's right to rearmament. It also renounced the use of force in territorial disputes between Hungary and the Little Entente States. [3] It is interesting to note that the Bled Conference occurred during the state visit of Regent Horthy and other leading Hungarian politicians to Germany. During the visit, Hitler and Ribbentrop in vain urged the Hungarians to commit themselves to military action against Czechoslovakia. These negotiations were summarized fifteen years later as follows:

> During these negotiations the Hungarian Government had resisted all the pressure that was put upon them to give a firm promise of military cooperation with

> Germany in an attack on Czechoslovakia... Not even Hitler's willingness at this stage, to allow Hungary to acquire the whole of Slovakia and Ruthenia, could tempt the Hungarians, in their disarmed state, to commit themselves to military action against Czechoslovakia. [4]

On November 28, 1938, foreign minister Kálmán Kánya was replaced at German instigation for the role he had played at the Bled Conference. According to the Minutes of the Berlin meeting on January 16, 1939 between the *Fuehrer* and István Csáky, the new foreign minister, Hitler strongly criticized the anti-German behaviour of the Hungarian government and had especially harsh words for Kánya's role at the Bled Conference. Hitler accused Kánya of being an enemy of Germany, and of helping to revive the Little Entente against Germany during Horthy's state visit to Germany. [5]

Ribbentrop's hostile attitude toward the Hungarian government seemed to be evident in the negotiations leading to the Vienna Award of 1938. Ciano recorded his telephone conversations with Ribbentrop on the matter as follows: "The truth is that he (Ribbentrop) intends to protect Czechoslovakia as far as he can and sacrifice the ambitions, even the legitimate ambitions, of Hungary." [6] Mussolini and Ciano wished to utilise Hungary as a barrier against Germany's eastward expansion. The German foreign ministry clearly saw this intention and therefore backed Slovakia against Hungary. In his conversation with Vojtech Tuka on February 12, 1939, Hitler "regretted that he had not known earlier of the Slovak struggle for independence." [7] During those days Hitler showed himself as a protector of Slovakia against Hungarian claims. A.J.P. Taylor was not far from the truth when he stated that, in protecting Slovakia's independence, "Hitler was acting against the Hungarians rather than against the Czechs." [8]

The relationship between Germany and Hungary never improved; on the contrary, it gradually worsened despite Mussolini's and Ciano's interventions to reconcile the two governments. The case of Poland was the next test of the worsening Hungarian-German connection. On July 24, 1939, just a few weeks before the outbreak of the German-Polish war, Prime Minister Teleki wrote two letters to Chancellor Hitler concerning Hungary's role in the foreseeable German-Polish

conflict. In his second letter Pál Teleki strongly emphasized that "Hungary could not, on moral grounds, be in a position to take armed action against Poland."[9] Teleki's second letter caused enormous consternation in Germany's ruling circles. On August 8, 1939, István Csáky received a ruthless answer at Berchtesgaden. Hitler felt mortally offended and declared that Germany did not want Hungarian assistance against Poland because as he said "Poland presents no military problem to us."[10] In order to conciliate German leadership, foreign minister Csáky apologized and withdrew Prime Minister Teleki's letters, explaining that "...unfortunately, they had apparently been misunderstood."[11]

On September 1, 1939, the German attack on Poland began. Hungary did not lend any assistance in this case. In contrast, the army of independent Slovakia joined the German forces and started military operations against her northern Slavic brothers. The Polish-Slovak war was very cruel the Poles even used chemical warfare against the Slovaks.

The Slovak attack on Poland created a cordial relationship between Germany and Slovakia at Hungary's expense. This was demonstrated on several occasions afterwards. As an aftermath of the war, more than 200,000 Poles escaped from their country and found refuge as political exiles in Hungary. From a German vantage point Hungary's hospitality to the refugees appeared to be an unfriendly act, all the more so as it contrasted sharply with the attitude of Slovakia. On October 21, 1939, the Slovak envoy Matúš Černák, was granted an audience with Hitler, during which the *Fuehrer* praised Slovakia's behaviour while sharply condemning Hungary's, and held out the prospect of the revision of the 1938 Vienna Award at the expense of Hungary.[12] In July, 1940, Jozef Tiso, the President of Slovakia, led a government delegation on a state visit to Germany. During the ensuing negotiations, Hitler and Ribbentrop reassured the Slovak leaders that their newly-established country was under the protection of Germany which would see to it that Hungary's hostile intentions against Slovakia would be prevented from materializing.[13]

Germany could not rely on the Teleki government, remembering only too well the uncooperative attitude of the Teleki-influenced government relating to Hitler's actions against Czechoslovakia in 1938 and Poland in 1939. As a result, Germany requested Ciano to secure the Hungarian government's permission to use its transportation system by German troops

destined to invade Greece in 1940.[14] At this time Hungary's military leadership enjoyed a privileged position afforded by Law No.II of 1939 on national defense. This law brought about fundamental changes in the country's political structure and deeply influenced its military and foreign policies in the coming years.[15] Law No.II of 1939 restored universal conscription, compelled all citizens between the ages of 14 and 70 to perform defense work even in peacetime, put under military control the most important branches of civilian administration including all industrial and agricultural production, and established the *Legfelsőbb Honvédelmi Tanács* (Supreme Council on National Defense), an organization which had de facto jurisdiction in important military, domestic, and foreign policy affairs over the regular government.

As a direct consequence of the overambitious implementation of the National Defense Law of 1939, Hungary actually had two governments: civilian and military. Regent Horthy sided with the latter in most of the civilian-military disputes. In these crucial times, on September 1, 1940, Teleki wrote a letter to Regent Horthy complaining about the growing influence of the military over the civilian administration as well as the activities of General Henrik Werth, Chief of the Hungarian General Staff. In this letter Teleki accused Werth and the military of interfering with most branches of the civilian government including the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, and Industry. The military, he further charged, without the knowledge of competent ministers, concluded agreements with Germany even on export-import matters. Teleki also raised objections against the customary practice of German army (intelligence corps) officers commissioned by the Royal Hungarian General Staff routinely participating in deciphering codes in the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs without the knowledge and approval of the Hungarian Foreign Minister.[16]

Regent Horthy, confident in the military, failed again to put an end to this state of affairs. Obviously, the Regent's political philosophy contributed to establishing close military cooperation between his country and Germany. In fact, by the time of the German invasion of Yugoslavia there had been well-established channels of communication between the two general staffs. On March 27, 1941, Hitler summoned the commanders of his air force and the army and while announcing an imminent attack on

Yugoslavia he stated, among others, the following intentions "We will try to get the neighboring states to participate in a suitable way. Actual military support against Yugoslavia is to be asked of Italy, Hungary and in certain respects of Bulgaria too."[17] At the same meeting Hitler announced territorial rewards for these countries: the Adriatic coast for Italy, the Bánát for Hungary and Macedonia for Bulgaria.[18]

Horthy and his military leaders agreed to the German request, while Teleki and some of his supporters had serious reservations. László Szabó, Hungarian military attaché in Rome and a friend and confidant of Mussolini, belonged to the latter group and confidentially informed his Yugoslav colleague in Rome about Hitler's intention days before the German attack on Yugoslavia.[19] On March 30, 1941, General Friedrich von Paulus arrived in Budapest to begin negotiations with General Werth, on Hungarian-German military collaboration aimed against Yugoslavia. According to Paulus there were no obstacles in the negotiations which resulted in mutual understanding.

On the same day, March 30, 1941, only days before the start of military operations against Yugoslavia, Károly Rassay, leader of Hungary's liberal opposition, called on the new foreign minister, László Bárdossy, to protest against the planned military action. Bárdossy defended the country's participation in the planned military operation arguing that if Hungary did not take part in the action Germany would occupy the country and appoint a government which would fulfill all the wishes of Berlin. At this meeting with Rassay, Bárdossy referred to the extraordinary pressure exerted upon the civilian government by Hungarian military circles to take active part in the forthcoming German-Yugoslav war. These military circles based their judgement on the fact that up to this point the Hungarian army had been mobilized three times without being engaged in action and that if the current mobilization did not culminate in military action, it would destroy the army's morale.[20]

As the time of Germany's military confrontation with the Soviet Union approached, German diplomats and generals tried repeatedly to bind Hungary more closely to the Third Reich. On May 24, 1941, Otto von Erdmannsdorff, the German envoy to Budapest, had a conversation with Prime Minister Bárdossy which dealt strictly with military topics and focused on Hungary's eventual participation in the anticipated German-Soviet war.[21]

Henceforth, high-ranking military officers of Germany desperately strove to obtain a voluntary pledge from the Hungarian government to participate in the coming German-Soviet conflict. Learning from past experience when Hungary refused to follow the German lead—in the Czechoslovak and Polish crises—Hitler and Ribbentrop clung to the principle of voluntary action. They did so because they could not countenance being flatly rejected again. In addition, the German government was rightly afraid of further territorial demands by Hungary which would have seriously complicated Berlin's relationship with its two client states, Slovakia and Rumania, at this stage of developments.

In spite of the insistence of General Werth and some other ranking Hungarian officers, the Bárdossy government stuck to its original standpoint that without the explicit request of the German government, made through diplomatic channels, the Hungarian government would not be willing to participate in the conflict.

Under escalating German pressure, Henrik Werth, Döme Sztójay, and Colonel Sándor Homlok, the military attaché at the Hungarian Legation in Berlin, in vain urged Bárdossy to make a voluntary declaration of a military alliance with Germany in the approaching war. On June 14, 1941, just a week before the outbreak of German-Soviet hostilities, Henrik Werth sent a *Memorandum* to Prime Minister Bárdossy.[22] In it Werth impatiently urged the government to authorize him to enter into negotiations with competent German military leaders with the aim of settling the essential points of military cooperation. In Werth's opinion, Hungary ought to participate in the forthcoming hostilities all the more because "the German armed forces will achieve victory (over the Red Army) and the participation of Hungary will last only for a very short time so that in a few weeks the mobilized Hungarian troops can gradually be discharged and can return home by harvest time." In the *Memorandum*, Werth steadfastly stressed that Hungary's territorial growth depended on the active cooperation of the Hungarian army with Germany's fighting forces, and concluded that the government should make a voluntary offer of a military alliance to Germany.

On June 20, 1941, just two days before the German attack on the Soviet Union, Colonel Homlok prepared a report to Werth emphasizing that:

> I hold necessary Hungary's military participation... Military operations will assume the character of a "Blitzkrieg"...According to more cautious estimates the war will be finished in 3 months...I heard such an opinion that after the first great battle the Soviet military might will start disintegrating. [23]

Some simultaneous events rendered Hungary's position very difficult. On June 22, 1941, Italy declared war against the USSR and, on the same day Slovakia severed diplomatic relations with the Soviets. The following day, General Antonescu issued a *Manifesto* to the Rumanian army and the nation to liberate Russian occupied Bessarabia and Bukovina. Concurrently Slovakia entered the war while Hungary merely severed its diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union. After the session of the Council of Ministers, Premier Bárdossy asked Károly Bartha, Minister of Defense, what the outlook for the war was. The Minister of Defense predicted total German victory in six weeks time. But German plans for a Blitzkrieg were threatened already during the first days of the war. This is why soon after June 22nd Germany urged some European nations to participate in one form or other in the "crusade" against the Soviet Union. The propaganda machinery of the *Nazionalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei* in particular tried to muster more nations for collective action. Despite these efforts, the Bárdossy government unequivocally refused to offer military aid on a voluntary basis.

During this highly critical period, interesting diplomatic actions and changes in attitude took place in Hungarian-Soviet relations which understandably irritated the diplomats of the Third Reich. It is important to put events into historical perspective. In order to counterbalance Germany's aid to Rumania in its dispute with Hungary, Molotov told József Kristóffy, Hungarian envoy to Moscow, as early as July 4th, 1940 that the Soviet Union considered Hungary's revisionist claims to be well-founded and that she will help Hungary at the peace conference. [24] Somewhat later, on August 25, 1940, Molotov again told Kristoffy that the Soviet Union never acknowledged the Paris Peace Treaties and the Treaty of Trianon because these treaties created a Rumania which was contrary to the interests of Hungary, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria alike. A day after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, Molotov again told Kristóffy

that the Soviet Union has no territorial demands against Rumania, but he, Molotov, wanted to know the Hungarian government's position concerning the ongoing conflict. Because of the circumstances in those days, Kristóffy no longer had contact with his government, therefore Molotov himself gave instructions for the restoration of communication links between Budapest and the Hungarian Legation in Moscow*. But a chain of occurrences intervened and drastically altered the course of history.

On June 22nd, in a telephone conversation with General Kurt Himer, liaison officer of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* at the Hungarian General Staff in Budapest, General Alfred Jodl clarified the official German stand by saying "We are accepting every Hungarian aid. We do not want to require anything, but everything which they offer we gratefully accept. It is out of the question that we would not want Hungary's participation."[25] On June 23, 1941, General Franz Halder, Chief of the German General Staff called General Himer, liaison officer in Budapest, on the telephone and stated categorically the following:

> Now it is important that the Hungarian military leadership bring into motion the political leadership to offer its voluntary help... We do not raise any demands because one shall pay for those, but we would be grateful for any support especially for fast-moving troops (mechanized army corps).[26]

The Hungarian government showed no sign of accepting the German stand relayed through Henrik Werth's mediation nor was it inclined to change its frequently expressed stand of non-intervention without the official request of the German government. Consequently there followed an appropriate shift in German strategy designed to sweep Hungary into the ongoing war without the delivery of any explicit German request through the usual diplomatic channels.

In retaliation for the Budapest government's unyielding stance this shift occurred very soon. On June 26, 1941 several airplanes

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**Editor's note*: *The Soviet message arrived in Budapest only on the 24th. For further comments on these events see the paper by N.F. Dreisziger.*

bombed Kassa, Munkács and Rahó, thereby attempting to drag Hungary, the unwilling satellite, into the war. Hungary's military leaders made the most of this opportunity to force the civilian government to declare a state of war against the Soviet Union claiming that Soviet warplanes did the bombing. The question was whether this invented explanation conformed to reality.

In September, 1941, two months after the bombing, I personally met the then Captain Ádám Krúdy, an eyewitness to the incident, in the home of a distant relative of his (at 4 Podmaniczky Street, Budapest). Krúdy adamantly insisted that German warplanes had carried out the bombing. His statement sounded logical, however, I still remember questioning the preciseness of his eyewitness account. It should be noted that the bombing incident remained a much-discussed topic in Hungary and the civilian population overwhelmingly regarded the official stand as at least questionable.

Between October 1943 and March 1944, I frequently met with several members of the Slovak delegation negotiating in Budapest. Interestingly, the name of one delegate was Ladislav (László) Bárdossy from Bratislava. A few of them claimed indirect and very limited knowledge of the bombers taking off from an airfield located in Slovakia. With a great deal of uncertainty, they mentioned the Spišská Nová Ves airfield. In the first year of Slovakia's independence (1938), this airfield had been bombed by Hungarian warplanes which caused strong anti-Hungarian sentiment across Slovakia. I tried to meet with high-ranking Slovak officers who served in Spišská Nová Ves at the time of the Kassa bombing. I knew about one who had been stationed in that town then and whom I had met frequently in Bratislava between June 1946 and November 1948: a certain Doctor J.P. At the time of the Kassa incident he had been a lieutenent-colonel and Chief of the Medical Staff of the Army of the Republic of Slovakia and had been stationed officially in Spišská Nová Ves. He related that a few high-ranking Slovak officers also knew about the German warplanes taking off from Spišská Nová Ves airfield with orders to strike nearby towns recovered by Hungary in 1938 through the Vienna Award of that year.

I tried to confirm this explanation of the Kassa mystery by establishing contact with knowledgeable Slovak military and

civilian individuals. Among them was Dr. Ján Spišiak, Slovakia's one-time envoy to Budapest. He always gave evasive answers. Another was General Ferdinand Čatloš, Minister of Defense of Slovakia. When he returned from Soviet captivity in 1948, I approached him in Bratislava through an intermediary who was a mutual friend, but General Catlos was unwilling to answer my relevant questions in any form.

Finally, I would like to attach an epilogue to the event. In light of German-Hungarian military cooperation between the June 26, 1941 bombing and the March 19, 1944 German occupation of Hungary, it is clear that even without the bombing of Kassa, Hungary sooner or later would have been forced to join Germany in its war on the Soviet Union. Germany as a totalitarian great power had all the means to impose its will on small nations like Hungary, Slovakia or Rumania—especially in times of crisis. It would have been the case all the more since Germany's adversaries, the Western great powers, happened to be disinterested observers at the outset of Germany's eastward expansion. Lord Halifax, British Foreign Secretary of that period well-summarized the Western attitude toward Germany and the small powers alike in his November 1st, 1938 statement "It is one thing to allow German expansion in Central Europe, which to my mind is a normal and natural thing, but we must be able to resist German expansion in Western Europe or else our whole position is undermined." [27]

NOTES

1. Document No. 525/T.-133 in Magda Ádám et al, comps., *Magyarország és a második világháború. Titkos dipomáciai okmányok a háború előzményeihez és történetéhez.* (Hungary and World War II. Secret diplomatic documents pertaining to pre-war and wartime history.) (Budapest: Kossuth Publishing House, 1959): 46-7.

2. See documents OL.Küm.po.o., 1934, 21/7t., 820, March 20, 1934; and OL.Küm.po.o., 1934, 21/27 t., 978, March 26, 1934, both published in *Magyarország és a második világháború*, p.47-9. This volume is reviewed by Francis Wagner in the October, 1961 issue of *American Historical Review*.

3. For a documented study of the negotiations between Hungary and the Little Entente states, see Robert Kvaček, "Podíl Československa na jednáních Malé Dohody a Madarska v letec 1936-1938," (The role of Czechoslovakia in the negotiations between the Little Entente and Hungary during the years 1936-1938) *Historicky Časopis*, XI, 3, (1963): 406-32.

4. *Survey of International Affairs*. London, III, 69. On this see also Thomas L. Sakmyster, "The Hungarian State Visit to Germany of August, 1938: Some New Evidence on Hungary in Hitler's Pre-Munich Policy," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 3, No.4, (Winter 1969): 677-91.

5. See Document No. 83 in *Magyarország és a második világháború*, pp. 202-9.

6. Ciano, *Diary*, Oct. 22. For a more comprehensive discussion of the topic see Edward

Chászár, *Decisions in Vienna. The Czechoslovak Hungarian Border Dispute of 1938* (Astor Park, Florida: Danubian Press, 1978): 52-5. See also Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral* (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1980) pp. 114, 127, 143, 153, 159, 163, 168; and Theodore Prochazka, *The Second Republic; The Disintegration of Post-Munich Czechoslovakia, October 1938-March 1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

7. *German Foreign Policy*, series D.IV., No.168. See also A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961): 188.

8. Taylor, *The Origins*, pp. 195-6.

9. *Akten zur deutschen auswartigen Politik, 1918-1945* (Baden-Baden, 1950-1956), Series D.VI.

10. Taylor, *The Origins*, p. 224

11. *German Foreign Policy*, series D.VI., No.784. See also Taylor, *The Origins*, p. 224.

12. *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*. Series D. Volume VIII, pp. 326-9.

13. For a detailed study see Lubomír Lipták, "Príprava a pricbeh rokovaní roku 1940 medzi predstavitalmi Nemecka a slovenského štátu" (Preparation and progress of the Salzburg negotiations in 1940 between the representatives of Germany and the Slovak State) *Historicky Časopis*, XIII, 3, (1965): 329-65.

14. Gyula Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája, 1939-1941* (The foreign policy of the Teleki Government, 1939-1941) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1964): 270.

15. *Magyar Törvénytár*, 1939, II.

16. Országos Levéltár. *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai* (Secret Documents of Miklós Horthy) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1963 (2nd Edition): 233-52.

17. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Document no. 217, pp.372-5.

18. Ibid.

19. Mr. Plamenatz, a member of the diplomatic staff of the Rome Embassy of Yugoslavia at that time, later a co-worker of mine in the Library of Congress (1953-1961), related these events to me several times adding that the Belgrade Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not believe in Germany's hostile intentions when decoding the message from the Yugoslav Embassy in Rome. Owing to the pressure Germany and the Hungarian military had exerted upon the Budapest government, Prime Minister Teleki committed suicide on April 3, 1941.

20. O.L. Kum. *Szent-Iványi kézirat* (The Szent-Iványi manuscript housed in the Hungarian National Archives) as quoted in Juhász, *A Teleki Kormány*, pp. 302-3.

21. For details, see Döme Sztójay's telegram to Prime Minister Bárdossy, published in *Magyarország és a második világháború*, pp. 367-9.

22. Number 10.563/k.l.vkt.-1941 published in *Magyarország és a második világháború*, pp. 357-61.

23. Number 1248/k.a./368/1941, published in *Magyarország és a második világháború*, pp. 361-4.

24. Kristóffy's telegram describing the meeting with Molotov arrived at the Foreign Ministry in Budapest on 8:00 a.m. on July 5, 1940. The author officially handled these Molotov-Kristóffy documents in his capacity as Slavic (Czechoslovak) expert at the Peace Preparatory Division of the Ministry between October 1945 and June 16, 1946. Dr. Iván Lajos delivered a lecture on the "Hungarian War Responsibility" on March 20, 1946 in Budapest and made use of these sources.

25. *Kriegstagebuch des Deutchen Generals beim Oberkommando der Kgl. Ungar. Wehrmacht*. Bundesarchiv. Koblenz. Quoted by József Kún, "Magyarország második világháborúba belépésének katonai vonatkozásai" (Military aspects of Hungary's entry into the Second World War) *Hadtörténeti közlemények*, No.1, 1962, p. 29. See also Gyula Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány*, pp. 345-6.

26. See the June 23, 1941 note by General Halder in *Kriegstagebuch*, quoted by Kún, "Magyarország második világháborúba."

27. Halifax to Phipps, November 1, 1938. *British Foreign Policy*, 3rd Series. III, 285, as quoted in Taylor, *The Origins*, pp.190-1.

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The Kassa Bombing: The Riddle of Ádám Krúdy *

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Just as most people associate the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War, Hungarians connect the Kassa bombings of 1941 with their country's involvement in World War II. But the air-raid of June 26, 1941 is notable not only for serving as the immediate prelude to Hungary's entry into the war, it is also remarkable for being one of the most perplexing mysteries of modern Hungarian history. Not surprisingly, the event has assumed an important place in historical writings on Hungary on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

At the risk of perpetrating an oversimplification, the communist historiography of the Kassa incident might be described as being heavily influenced by "official interpretation," while Western writings on the subject are characterized by widely divergent speculations often based on peripheral source materials. With historians in Hungary and other Iron Curtain countries rarely feeling free to question the official line, and historians in the West lacking access to some of the pertinent archival material, it is not surprising that progress in the unravelling of the riddles of the Kassa bombing has been slow.

The search for the culprits has been further complicated by the fact that, ever since the summer of 1941, there seem to have been persistent and deliberate efforts to hide or distort the truth in connection with the raid. That it should be so is not surprising given the event's close connection to the question of Hungary's war-guilt. Historians hitherto have tended to concentrate their

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efforts on finding evidence for a plot behind the bombing. This paper will deal mainly with the conspiracies which seem to have been committed by those who have attempted to explain the incident. In particular, it will try to offer a possible—or at least a plausible—explanation for the changing accounts of the raid that have been advanced at various times by the late Ádám Krúdy, the raid's best-known eyewitness. Admittedly, an understanding of the mystery posed by Krúdy will not solve the larger riddle, who bombed Kassa and why, but it might reduce the confusion faced by historians who wish to arrive at the truth. Exposing the secret of Ádám Krúdy might also suggest that there has been more intrigue, deception and double-dealing connected to the Kassa story than meets the eye or has been suspected hitherto.

Hungarian Policies and Intentions in June, 1941

There can be no denial of the fact that in the months before June of 1941 countervailing and often contradictory tendencies existed in Hungarian foreign policy on the dual question of relations with Germany and participation in the war. As has been pointed out in other studies in this volume and in publications elsewhere, elements of Hungary's leadership wished to avoid close collaboration with Nazi Germany, especially in the spreading military conflict. A few civilian and several military leaders thought otherwise. Still others vacillated and often allowed their feelings on this crucial issue to be influenced by daily developments. During the early years of German expansion, in particular during much of 1938, the advocates of non-involvement in Hitler's ventures possessed a definite upper-hand in Budapest.[1] But as Hitler scored his stunning victories, the opponents of a pro-German orientation saw their numbers and influence decline in Hungary. As has been mentioned in Professor Wagner's study, Kálmán Kánya had to be removed from the direction of Hungarian foreign policy late in 1938. The influence wielded by the conservative statesman István Bethlen declined by 1940 when his 1939 prediction for an early collapse of Nazi Germany failed to materialize. And Pál Teleki committed suicide when, in April of 1941, he felt that his country could no longer retain the good will of Great Britain in view of the inevitable Hungarian complicity in the German invasion of Yugoslavia. Notwithstanding these losses, in the weeks before the fateful events of late June,

1941, Hungary's civilian leadership continued its policy of non-involvement in the European war. As is well known, the repeated pleas of General Henrik Werth, the Chief of the Hungarian General Staff, for a Hungarian-German military alliance, were firmly refused, and the government continued to maintain its stand for a while even after the start of the German invasion of Russia on the 22nd.[2] But soon enormous pressure was exerted on the government to change its course. Pro-Nazi groups within the country clamoured for a show of solidarity with the "great crusade" against Bolshevism. Warning came from Rome that Hungary's inaction might have harmful consequences. Slovakia also joined the war against the U.S.S.R., leaving Hungary as the only East Central European state not to have done so. But more important was still a message received from Germany to the effect that if Hungary wanted to participate in the campaign against Russia, she would have to join immediately and voluntarily.[3] The message was delivered in "plain and emphatic" language by General Kurt Himer, the German High Command's representative in Hungary, to General Werth who passed it on to Premier László Bárdossy. Evidently disturbed by developments, Bárdossy summoned Otto von Erdmannsdorff, the German Minister to Hungary, for an interview and told him that the matter of Hungary's participation was up to the country's civilian government to decide. If Germany desired Hungary's assistance she would have to request it through the regular diplomatic channels.[4]

The Hungarian Premier's response to the German demand deserves special attention. There may be historians who would dismiss it as political posturing, or even an attempt to extract concessions from Germany in return for Hungarian participation. But it is doubtful if Bárdossy could really expect Hitler practically to beg for Hungary's assistance, especially when all of Germany's other "friends" had offered their help voluntarily. Bárdossy's motives were probably different. In telling the Germans that Hungary's government would consider the question of participation in the war if Germany had asked for this officially, the Premier probably wanted to avoid his country's involvement in the war without having to admit openly that Hungary did not want to participate. Three times during the past three years Hitler had moved or was about to move against one of Hungary's neighbours, and three times the Hungarian

leaders proved most reluctant—on two occasions they had in fact told Hitler in advance that they would not join him in a war. Taking Hitler's temper and power into consideration, Bárdossy could not tell the Germans for a third time that Hungary wished to stay out of the conflict, but he hoped to accomplish this through requesting what the Germans had promised not to do: ask for Hungarian help formally.

Because of the Kassa bombing, Bárdossy could not realize his hope. He had been under tremendous pressure to change his policy, and the report about the air raids in Hungary near the Soviet border unnerved him, just as they unnerved Horthy, the elderly head-of-state.[5] Interestingly, there is evidence to the effect that when Bárdossy was told of the "Soviet attack," he immediately jumped to the conclusion that the attackers must have been German provocateurs, determined to force Hungary into the war. Bárdossy seems to have concluded that if the Germans were willing to go to such extremes to have their way, resistance was useless, and Hungary better accept the inevitable and join the war at once.[6]

Were the Russians the Culprits, after all?

Although Bárdossy's first reaction to the bombing was the same that was accepted in most circles later—that the bombing was a German plot to force the hands of the Hungarian government—it is by no means certain that it was the correct explanation of the raid. Undoubtedly, the Germans had an interest in involving Hungary in the war, or may have been put up to the plot by Hungarians desirous of their country's participation in the war. The Germans also had the means to carry out the raid, though not so easily as believers of the conspiracy explanation suggest. In fact, a host of arguments can be brought up against this theory. The most weighty is the complete lack of direct evidence. Traditionally, the testimony of three men has been cited as being more or less direct proof of the "German plot" theory. These men are István Újszászy, Rudolph Bamler and Ádám Krúdy. Újszászy's and Bamler's revelations have been discussed in another part of this volume (as well as in other publications) and Krúdy's accounts (and some other conservative sources) will be analyzed later. The fact is that none of these testimonies prove anything in connection with the incident, and no other direct

evidence has surfaced in the decades of search for proof. There is some circumstantial evidence—the best and most recent presented in this volume—but there is no concrete proof.

Another problem with the conspiracy theory is the fact that the raid could not have been carried out by the Germans without much circumspection and extensive preparations. First of all it was necessary for the perpetrators to obtain planes that could be taken for Russian ones. Second, the conspirators had to obtain bombs of Russian manufacture. Third, they had to mount these bombs on their planes, a complicated task, as German bombers in those days did not have bomb-racks capable of holding Russian bombs. In fact, it seems that the bombs dropped on Kassa were 100 kg bombs while the standard stock of the *Luftwaffe* were the 50 and 250 kg bombs.[7] Last but not least, just before the raid (and right after its completion) the markings of the planes had to be changed. To put it briefly, much effort was needed for the preparation (and the subsequent cover-up) of such a raid, and undoubtedly many people had to be involved—a minimum of nine for the air crews alone. It seems hardly believable that not one of those party to the preparation and execution of the plot has come forth to tell the truth in the more than four decades since 1941.

It should also be kept in mind that a secret operation on the scale of the Kassa bombing was quite risky. Even if the main requirements of the mission—the appropriate planes, the Russian bombs, the alterations to the bomb-racks, the changing of the markings—had been met, identification was still possible as the motors in the planes or the sound they produced could hardly have been changed. Then there was the chance that one or more of the aircraft might be shot down or would have an accident.[8] In summary, it seems incredible that a provocation of this kind would be carried out in broad daylight against a target swarming with military personnel (Kassa served as a divisional headquarters for the Hungarian army, and had an Air Force school).

Lacking positive proof for their theory, some advocates of the conspiracy explanation have argued that the attackers must have been German, since only Germany had a motive for the raid and the means to carry it out. In this connection the late C.A. Macartney came up with a seemingly ingenious explanation, according to which the culprits were neither German nor

Russian, but Slovak pilots—flying stolen German planes—on their way to the Soviet Union. [9] This hypothesis is interesting but there are several problems with it, the foremost being the "stolen" planes and the Russian bombs. And Slovak pilots could hardly have carried out the raid in their own planes as their country's air force was equipped almost exclusively with aircraft that were very different in appearance from the ones seen above Kassa during the raid. [10] With the "Slovak explanation" disposed of, we may ask the questions could the Russians have had a reason for staging the attack and did they have the means to carry it out?

On innumerable occasions these questions have been answered in the negative. Actually, the first of these questions is not of great importance. Many bombings were carried out during the war against unintended targets, as Canadian soldiers fighting in northern France as well as the citizens of Schaffhousen in Switzerland found out. But there might have even been a motive for a Soviet raid against Hungary. Anyone who has examined the diplomatic exchanges between Budapest and Moscow in the days before the Kassa raid will realize that just before the event Hungary had—quite unintentionally—delivered an affront to the Kremlin. The fact is that through József Kristóffy, the Hungarian Minister in Moscow, the Soviets had made a friendly overture aimed to buy Hungarian neutrality but as Kristóffy's message was late in arriving in Budapest, all the Russians got in reply was the severance of diplomatic relations by Hungary. [11] And if this was not a possible cause for the Soviets' action, then there is the possibility that they may have wished to retaliate for the Slovak declaration of war on them on the 25th. This writer has suggested in an earlier study that the raid on Kassa might have been aimed at Slovakia but hit a Hungarian target through a misunderstanding. [12]

There remains the more important question whether the Soviets had the means of attacking targets in foreign territory such as Slovakia or Hungary. This question has rarely been asked by historians examining the Kassa incident probably because it has been generally presumed that by the 26th of June the Red Air Force had suffered irreparable losses and was incapable of offensive action. The facts seem to contradict such assumptions however. First of all, the Soviet Air Force on the southern front received minimal damage in the initial German onslaught and was considered to be "very strong" by the German High

Command in the first days of the German advance.[13] Indeed, it has been suggested that the bulk of Russian air power was lost not in the *Luftwaffe* assault of the 22nd of June, but in the massive and reckless Russian aerial counteroffensive that Moscow ordered after it became evident that the Germans' move of the 22nd was not a "provocation" as Stalin had first suspected, but a full-scale invasion.[14]

From the above it can be safely concluded that it is not at all impossible that the raid was the work of the Russians, intended probably against Slovakia. As has been mentioned, this possibility has been consistently denied in Hungary until recently.[15] In a sense then, Hungarian historians—consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly—have been part of a conspiracy of silence concerning some of the evidence available in connection with the raid. They can be said to have been party to a plot to blame the bombing on the forces of Nazism. The originator of this communist conspiracy seems to have been none other than Mátyás Rákosi himself, broadcasting into wartime Hungary from the U.S.S.R.[16]

Conservative Hungarian Explanations

As has been mentioned, the conspiracy theory of the bombing has been accepted by Horthy, and many other members of Hungary's wartime elite. It is important to note, however, that there are a few former members of the old regime that reject this theory, while others have offered accounts that differ substantially from those held in communist Hungary. Among those rejecting the possibility that the culprits might have been German (or other) conspirators are two of the authors of the three-volume history of Hungary's interwar and wartime military that had been prepared in exile under the direction of the General Lajos Veress.[17] Another émigré who offers a different perspective on the events of the 26th June, 1941, is Antal Ullein-Reviczky. This man, who in his capacity of Chief of the Press Bureau was in repeated contact with Bárdossy on that fateful day, tells that the Premier suspected that German mischief may have been behind the bombing, but had no direct information to that effect.[18] Another former member of Hungary's wartime government, Vilmos Nagybaczoni Nagy, seems to have been also unaware of the "Krúdy message" business at the time he published his memoirs soon after the end

of the war. [19] Still other émigré commentators, writing much later, refuse to take sides on the question whether the raid was a conspiracy or an act of aggression (perhaps unintentional) on the part of the Russians. [20]

The majority of the former members of Hungary's wartime establishment, however, endorse the "conspiracy theory." One of them is Géza Lakatos, whose recollections have appeared only recently under the title *Ahogyan én láttam* (As I Saw It). Great expectations might have been attached to Lakatos' account. First of all, he was an important and tragic figure of wartime Hungary's history as Premier in the fall of 1944 he was assigned the task of achieving Hungary's defection from the Axis camp, an attempt which was doomed to failure from the start. More important from our point of view, is the fact that for quite some time after the summer of 1941, Lakatos had been divisional commander in Kassa, a posting which should have enabled him to receive useful official or unofficial information regarding the Kassa raid. Nevertheless, his account of the incident is disappointing. Basically he accepts the current official Hungarian explanation of the event and cites the testimony of "Colonel Krúdy." Lakatos also tells that before this version gained general acceptance, certain Hungarian sources attributed the bombing to a Czech officer in the Soviet air force who had been fired from his job in the Kassa post office when the city had been returned to Hungary by the First Vienna Award of the fall of 1938—an unlikely story. The only interesting comment Lakatos makes about the whole matter is that in July of 1941 Werth had told him confidentially that the Kassa bombing had come "very handy" for him. [21]

It would probably be safe to assume that Lakatos, as well as most other Hungarian memoir writers of the past three decades, have been influenced by what they had considered to be an accepted article of faith regarding the Kassa incident. Horthy had spoken on the matter, historians in Hungary were at one with him, and the majority of historians in the West had also endorsed their interpretations. Under the circumstances it is evident that reminiscences written in the past three decades are not reliable sources of information on the subject. We may ask the question whether there are any conservative, i.e., non-communist sources predating the Horthy memoirs that endorse the conspiracy theory—along with references to the testimony of Krúdy and his

supposed message to Bárdossy? As has been seen, neither Ullein-Reviczky's nor Nagybaczoni Nagy's work qualify in this category. Apparently, the only account that does, is the unpublished manuscript of Domonkos Szent Iványi. This massive work, in part a collection of documents and in part a semi-official account of Hungary's role in the Second World War, was started soon after the war's outbreak. Its aim, apparently, had been to show Hungary in a favourable light to postwar audiences. The work attributes the Kassa conspiracy to Hungarian and German military circles, working behind the backs of Horthy and the Hungarian government. The manuscript also refers to Krúdy's letter to Bárdossy about the Kassa bombing.[22]

The conservatives' case for the theory of the "German bombing" of Kassa rests really on only two sources: the Horthy memoirs, and the war-time writings of Szent Iványi. But we may ask the question, where did these two authors obtain their information? Obviously, this is an important question and we are fortunate to know the answer. Horthy himself reveals that he gained his knowledge of the events concerning the Bárdossy decision to enter the war against Russia from István Bárczy, Hungary's Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the time.[23] And before Szent Iványi died in Western exile, he was asked where he had obtained his information about the same events. His answer was that he had "heard it" from none other than the same István Bárczy.[24] It seems then that, as far as the conservatives are concerned, the whole business of the German comspiracy theory derives from one single person. If this is indeed the case, then we may ask whether it is possible that this man had certain personal or political motives in spreading such information? To speculate on this possibility it is necessary first to examine certain developments in Hungary in the months that followed the Kassa raid.

The Dismissal of Bárdossy

As has been mentioned, in the afternoon of the 26th of June Hungary's authorities—as well as newspapers—pronounced the Kassa bombing to be the work of the Russians. This conclusion was reached in Budapest as a result of reports that had come from Kassa through military channels—civilian communications having been disrupted by the raid for many hours. This was the

"official" explanation. How various Hungarian leaders explained the event to themselves and their most trustworthy friends is a matter of conjecture. As has been mentioned, Bárdossy had suspected the Germans right from the start. There is no concrete evidence concerning the views of others, but as resentment against the Germans grew in Hungary, the climate became receptive to the acceptance of beliefs such as Bárdossy's.

That the German alliance was unpopular with a large portion of Hungary's elite (as well as her people), is illustrated by developments in the aftermath of the country's entry into the war. It seems that no sooner had the decision to join the war been made, the country's leaders began making efforts to diminish if not to dismantle their newest entanglement. True, lip-service continued to be paid to German-Hungarian friendship, and the Germans were given all kinds of "reasons" why Hungarian soldiers were needed more at home than in Russia. But the basic tenet of policy became the lessening of military involvement.[25] General Werth was unhappy with these trends in government policy and objected to them. He was dismissed in September. Both he, and Dezső László, the pro-German Chief of the General Staff's Operational Section, were replaced by men who were more in tune with their civilian superiors' attitudes.[26] .

Werth's dismissal, coming as it did long before the possibility of German defeat in the war became evident, has puzzled historians. It has been seen as a "reversal" of Hungarian policy.[27] Rather than being a major shift in policy, the dismissal of Werth represents a continuity in Hungarian attitudes to the issue of involvement in the war. Most of Hungary's leaders had been averse to involvement before 26 June 1941, and they remained averse to the idea later. Their aversion only grew as the country was becoming committed to Germany more and more, and as circumstances forced them to pretend increasing enthusiasm about a cause they did not really believe in. It was under these circumstances that another important development took place in Hungary early in 1942: the dismissal of Bárdossy and his replacement by Miklós Kállay, a man with even fewer pro-German sympathies.

Bárdossy's demise became inevitable when, in the eyes of Regent Horthy and his closest advisers, he came to symbolize Hungary's deeper and deeper involvement in the war. Horthy in particular felt that Bárdossy had committed himself to the

German line more than was necessary and desirable. Professor Macartney aptly explained that, in blaming Bárdossy for the country's involvement in the war, Horthy unconsciously tried to silence "a voice of inner self-reproach...by putting the blame on someone else."[28] After the war Horthy accused Bárdossy of withholding from him vital information during the crises of late June, 1941, including the report about the "German bombing" of Kassa from Krúdy.[29] How Horthy came to the conclusion that Bárdossy had betrayed him cannot be ascertained exactly. But one possible explanation can be advanced from a careful re-examination of the story of Ádám Krúdy, the star witness of the Kassa raid.

The Secret of Ádám Krúdy

Most historians of wartime Hungary know Ádám Krúdy as the Hungarian air force officer who had witnessed the Kassa bombing and has claimed ever since that the perpetrators had been Germans. The most commonly known account of the raid by Krúdy goes something like this:

> In the early afternoon of the 26th, Krúdy was at the Kassa airfield. Shortly after one o'clock he noticed four planes approaching. They flew in a "German formation" and bore the "yellow markings of Axis aircraft." After circling the city, they dropped their bombs on the centre of the city. With two of his comrades, Krúdy took to the air with their own aircraft and managed to get close enough to the attackers to determine that they were German-made Heinkel 111 twin-engined bombers. On returning, Krúdy made attempts to report his findings to his military superiors. To make sure that his message was not lost or disregarded by the military, he contacted Prime Minister Bárdossy and informed him that the attacking aircraft were German and bore Axis markings.[30]

Many questions come to mind in connection with this account. Why would the attackers, if they were really German, fly in a "German formation" and have markings that betrayed their identity? How could planes parked on a runway catch up with ones already departing the scene? And there are other problems as well. Most witnesses to the Kassa incident reported seeing three planes, the German formation Krúdy mentioned involves

four. "Yellow" markings, allegedly seen by Krúdy, were not the markings of Axis aircraft, but those of all military training craft in Europe at the time. The Hungarian military at Kassa did not have fighter planes which could catch up with Heinkel 111 aircraft, in fact there were no Hungarian fighter planes at Kassa at all. What training craft there were sat on the runways low on fuel, and Krúdy and his men did not even try to take to the air.

The question may be asked at this point if Krúdy's story is obviously false, what is the truth? The precise answer to this query may never be known. The actions of statesmen and diplomats can often be traced fairly accurately even from the distance of several decades, but those of low-ranked people cannot be documented. Nevertheless, some information has surfaced on Ádám Krúdy and it is both unexpected and intriguing.

In June of 1941 Krúdy was a young captain, a flight instructor with the Hungarian Air Force Academy at Kassa. The raid found him at the academy's airfield, on the southern outskirts of the city.[31] He and his colleagues had just returned from the morning's training flights and were about to drive into town for lunch. Their planes sat unserviced on the runways. The appearance of unexpected aircraft did not cause particular alarm at the airfield, and some of the men present even assumed that the planes were coming to land: exactly twenty-four hours earlier two German military aircraft had made an unscheduled stop-over at Kassa. The approaching planes appeared strange, however, as no one at the airfield could recognize their type or manufacture. When the men realized that the planes came to bomb the city, they sounded the air-raid siren and opened fire on the attackers. Giving chase to them with unserviced training craft was a useless proposition so, with the attacking planes gone unscathed, Krúdy and another of the instructors, Jenő Csirke, drove into Kassa to inspect the damage and to report their observations to their superiors at the Air Force Academy's headquarters.

In the raid, the local Post and Telegraph Office was heavily damaged and civilian telecommunications were put out of action until after midnight. When the lines were restored, a request came from the Premier's office in Budapest for an air force officer who had witnessed the bombing. Csirke was summoned, as he lived closest. He was asked to describe the events and say

whether the planes were German or not. He replied that the planes had come from the East, had dropped their bombs and had been fired on as they departed. To the specific question whether the planes were German, Csirke answered that they were definitely not of German manufacture.

This is the story of the events of the 26th at the Kassa airfield as reconstructed from the testimony of Jenő Csirke (known later in Montreal as Eugene Chirke), Krúdy's colleague and the man whom Krúdy had named as having been one of those who accompanied him on the flight which resulted in the positive identification of the attackers. Csirke's story is corroborated in some of its details by other witnesses.[32] Perhaps this hitherto little-known version would accomplish little, had Krúdy not been telling so many transparent lies. But given the nature of Krúdy's testimony, the above version certainly appears more credible. There is another aspect to the Csirke version, something which is more difficult to corroborate. According to Csirke, no one at the airfield, not even Krúdy, identified the planes as German at the time. Krúdy has claimed otherwise in all of his public statements (given after the war) and his private conversations (the earliest of these we know about took place in September of 1941, and the latest, three decades later, not long before his death).[33]

When the war was over, it became possible for Krúdy to reveal his version of the Kassa raid publicly. One would expect that he would have been invited to testify at the war-crimes trial of Premier Bárdossy, but this does not seem to have been the case. As far as this writer knows, Krúdy went public with his story in the popular periodical *Képes Figyelő* (Illustrated Observer), early in 1946.[34] We cannot know how accurately Krúdy's words were reported in this publication however, there does not seem to have been reasons for any deliberate misrepresentation of the "facts" he was trying to convey.

The *Képes Figyelő* version of Krúdy's account goes like this: At the time of the appearance of the planes, Krúdy was with two of his mechanics at the Kassa airfield. They immediately realized that the planes were German, as they flew in a "foursome" formation and had yellow markings. When the bombing began, Krúdy immediately phoned the headquarters of the Air Force Academy and then proceeded to write an official report on the incident. When his report was not forwarded to the "appropriate authorities," he wrote a letter to Premier Bárdossy telling him

that not Russian but German planes bombed the city, and that the official investigation gave a false account. Krúdy was hoping that the declaration of war might be reversed as a result of his letter. There is another piece of interesting information in this version of the Kassa raid: Krúdy tells that after the bombing he was reproached by Hungarian military authorities for having failed to take to the air for the purpose of giving chase to the attackers.[35]

Apart from a few inherent contradictions and inaccuracies, this version of the raid is still plausible. A great change in this respect seems to have taken place by the 1950s when communist historians began exploring the incident, usually in the light of Krúdy's new and more detailed accounts. It was at this time that the by now familiar communist explanation of the Kassa bombing began emerging. As has been mentioned, this involved the story of Krúdy and his colleagues (including Csirke) taking to the air, catching up with the attackers, and identifying them—beyond any doubt—as being German. These stories even talked of a phone call which Krúdy made soon after the bombing to Premier Bárdossy.[36]

Today, the total unreliability of Krúdy's testimony is evident to the few Western historians who have examined the Kassa incident.[37] No one seems to have taken the effort, however, to try to explain Krúdy's motives for telling transparent lies and, more importantly in our opinion, for changing his story in a substantial way twice since that fateful day in June of 1941. Of course, the riddle of Krúdy may never be solved satisfactorily: perhaps he had an overactive imagination coupled with a desire to keep himself in the limelight. But there may have been other reasons—a method to his madness, so to speak. If we would have a case of an eyewitness who began blaming the incident on the Germans during the dark days of the Rákosi dictatorship, we would have a relatively easy task at guessing his motivation. In this period ex-officers of Hungary's wartime forces often faced persecution, and providing support for the communists' official interpretation of events could have helped to save a person from the fate of some of his less fortunate former comrades-in-arms. Still another explanation could be offered if Krúdy came out with his story at the end of, or immediately after, the war. Evidently, during that period it would have been in the interest of Hungary's wartime élite to prove that the event that had prompted them to

become involved in the war was the product of a vile conspiracy. Presumably, such a story would help to lessen the responsibility Hungary's leaders shouldered for their decision to join Hitler's campaign against the Soviets. Krúdy's testimony, in particular, could have served the specific purpose of shifting some of the blame from Horthy's shoulders onto those of Bárdossy. The fact that in their writings several members of Hungary's wartime elite paid special attention to Krúdy's account, often exaggerating its significance, suggests that the Krúdy story was indeed meant to serve such a purpose. But this still does not mean that it had been invented for this reason. In fact, there is evidence that the whole affair originated before there was any indication of Axis defeat, and served a different, though definitely political, objective.

The clue is the message Krúdy allegedly sent about the bombing to Bárdossy. Secondary sources are especially confusing (and confused) about this. Some talk about a letter, others about a telegram, still others about a telephone message or even a direct telephone call. Unfortunately for the supporters of the "conspiracy theory," this whole business of the "message" is suspect. First of all, Bárdossy spent the afternoon away from his office—first with the Regent and then in a cabinet meeting—not situations in which he could be interrupted by a phone call. Secondly, civilian telephone communications had been interrupted by the bombing, and it is inconceivable that a captain would be allowed to use military lines to contact the country's civilian leader, especially to contradict the report of his own military superiors. Thirdly, in his first postwar public disclosure, Krúdy talks not of a telephone message or a telegram, but a letter written to persuade Bárdossy to reverse the decision to go to war.[38] As that decision had been announced on the 27th of June, Krúdy could not have sent his letter on the 26th (and it could not have reached Bárdossy until days later).

Finally, it is quite probable that the so-called "Krúdy message," even in a letter form, has never existed. To our knowledge, no historian has seen its original. All references to it can be traced to Krúdy himself, or to the aforementioned works by Horthy and Szent Iványi. The latter two persons, as has been pointed out above, have heard about it from Bárczy. We may now continue probing the question whether Bárczy had any personal motives for telling a story which may not have been true? Was there anything in his background that would prompt him to

do so? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered with certainty as we know little about him. We know, however, that he was a trusted advisor to Horthy in fact, one of his friends.[39] We also know that at the end of the war he bitterly denounced Bárdossy and accused him, among other things, of tampering with the minutes of the Ministerial Council. And there is evidence that Bárczy hated Bárdossy already in the summer of 1941.[40] One is tempted to conclude from all this that Bárczy may have had an interest in convincing Horthy that Bárdossy had been instrumental in prescipitating Hungary's entry into the war with the full knowledge that the Kassa bombing was a "German provocation." To what extent, if any, Bárdossy's dismissal in early 1942 was the result of Bárczy's (and Krúdy's) whispering campaign, may never be known. That in the long run these men succeeded in thoroughly discrediting Bárdossy in the eyes of the Regent—and in those of the Hungarian public—is certain.[41] What is most unlikely to be known ever is whether there was any collusion between Bárczy and Krúdy in these machinations which seem to have been designed, first and foremost, to destroy the political fortunes of Bárdossy.

The theory that Krúdy's allegations—rather than being simple hallucinations, or lies inspired by the communists—were part of some domestic intrigue within wartime Hungary's establishment, explains a surprising number of riddles in connection with the whole "Krúdy testimony" business. It explains why this man, who according to his colleagues at first did not consider the attackers to be German, changed his mind later. It explains also the timing of his change-of-heart: not at the end of the war when it would have been more logical—and much safer—but just about the time some of Hungary's leaders, in particular, Horthy, began having serious second thoughts about the whole Russian adventure. And it explains above all why Krúdy claims to have contacted Bárdossy, and Bárdossy only, among the members of Hungary's elite at the time. One would presume that if he really wanted his government to be aware of the facts, he would have made efforts to reach other leaders in Budapest as well; at least would have tried to contact Ferenc Krúdy, his own illustrious and influential uncle.[42]

The explanation offered here concerning the Krúdy story might even account for the man's behaviour after the communist takeover in Hungary at the end of the 1940s. With the

communists' accession to power, Krúdy inevitably found himself in an awkward situation. His earlier testimony now ideally suited the purposes of his country's new masters. Krúdy, undoubtedly a staunch believer in a Christian and conservative Hungary, must have been very unhappy about this turn of events, yet he could not retract his allegations. In his frustration, he decided on another approach. He would dress up his story in a way that would not arouse the suspicion of the communists, but would be seen as preposterous in the West and would help to discredit the official communist interpretation of the affair. Accordingly, he began talking about "taking to the air," "catching up" with the attackers, and so on. He even named Csirke as one of the persons who had accompanied him on this mission. All this was sheer nonsense: a successful chase couldn't have been possible, it didn't take place, and Csirke was there (in Montreal) to testify to this effect. Krúdy's ploy worked. Communist historians of the 1950s and 1960s seem to have endorsed, without reservations, his "new" and "more detailed" version of the story. Overnight, Krúdy, the secret agent of wartime "Horthyite" intrigue, became the star witness of communist historiography. However, instead of doing that historiography a service, he bequeathed it only misinformation, as well as a legacy prejudicial to its reputation.

The Kassa incident, which may or may not have been the result of a conspiracy, certainly seems to have given rise to intrigues by those who for one reason or another wanted certain explanations attached to it. The complete story of these historiographical conspiracies may never be known. Nevertheless, it seems certain that, if historians ever wish to start unravelling the mysteries surrounding the incident itself, they will have to be much more careful when they assess what has been said about this affair by everyone, and especially by its star witness, the perplexing and indubitably mischievous Ádám Krúdy.

NOTES

1. See C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth; A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, I (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1957); Thomas L. Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis, 1936-1939* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1980), as well as my own *Hungary's Way to World War II* (Toronto: Hungarian Helicon Society, 1968).

2. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, II, chapter 2. N.F. Driesziger, "The Hungarian General Staff and Diplomacy, 1939-1941," in M.L. Kovacs, ed., *Hungarian Canadian Perspectives; Selected Papers* (Ottawa: Hungarian Readers' Service, 1980, special issue of the *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies*, VII, no. 1): 18f.

3. A text of this message is printed in *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, XIII, doc. no. 54.

4. A record of Bárdossy's discussion with Erdmansdorff is printed in Gyula Juhász, ed., *Magyarország külpolitikája a nyugati hadjárattól a Szovjetunió megtámadásáig, 1940-1941* (Hungary's foreign policy from the time of the Western Campaign to the invasion of the Soviet Union, 1940-1941), vol. V of the series *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához, 1936-1945* (Diplomatic documents on Hungary's foreign policy, 1936-1945) (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1982) doc. no. 872 (pp. 1217-1221).

5. The city of Kassa was not the only target attacked at the time. According to several primary and secondary sources, an air-raid was carried out at about noon against the town of Rahó very near the Russian-Hungarian border. Other sources mention an attack on the city of Munkács. Contemporary sources leave little doubt that the attack (on the train) near Rahó was the work of Russian planes. I have not been able to locate any documentary evidence on the raid against Munkács. For further discussion see Dreisziger, *Hungary's way*, pp.167-75. For a Hungarian historian's reference to these events see Gyula Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája, 1939-1941* (The foreign policy of the Teleki Government, 1939-1941) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1964): 353.

6. Antal Ullein-Reviczky, *Guerre Allemande; Paix Russe* (Neuchatel: Histoire et Société d'Aujourd'hui, 1947): 108.

7. Research into the technical aspects of the Kassa bombing has been carried on mainly by József Ormay, a former officer of wartime Hungarian Air Force, who now lives in Ontario, Canada. For one of his studies see "Kassai bombák" (The bombs of Kassa) in *Magyar Szárnyak* (Hungarian wings), XI, no.11 (1982): 86-90. For similar views see József Borus, "Kassa bombázásáról" (About the bombing of Kassa) in *História*, IV, no. 1: 7f.

8. Many aircrews and bombers met their sudden demise during the war when their bombs exploded prematurely before leaving the aircraft's bomb-bay.

9. C.A. Macartney, "Hungary's Declaration of War on the U.S.S.R. in 1941," in A.O. Sarkinissian, ed., *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography* (London: Longmans, 1961): 165. At one time, Julian Borsányi, the Kassa bombing's most persistent researcher, also subscribed to the "Slovak" explanation. See his "Kik bombázták 1941 június 26.-án Kassát?" (Who bombed Kassa on the 26th of June, 1941?) especially part 2, *Új Látóhatár* (New Horizon), 21, no. 6 (December 1970).

10. The equipment of the Slovak air-force consisted mainly of by-planes. See Z. Titz, "The Luftwaffe's First "Ally"," *Flying Review International* 19, no. 9 (June 1964): 56-7.

11. For a discussion of these diplomatic exhanges see my article "New Twist to an Old Riddle: The Bombing of Kassa (Kosice), June 26, 1941," *Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 2 (June 1972): 234f.

12. Ibid., p. 241f.

13. H.A. Jacobsen, ed., *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, I (Frankfurt am Main, 1965): 409. See also: John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975): 121.

14. Professor Erickson cites the example of a Soviet air force commander who lost 600 aircraft in one of these operations. According to Erickson, these "attempted long-range raids by Soviet bombers following a by now useless operational plan" led only to disaster for the Red Air Force. Erickson, *The Soviet High Command; A Military-Political History, 1918-1941* (London: Macmillan, 1962): 600, see also p. 615.

15. The first prominent historian to suggest in Hungary that the Kassa bombing might have been committed by the Soviets—by mistake—was György Ránki: "Ki bombázta Kassát?" (Who bombed Kassa?) *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Literature) April 21, 1979. In response to Ránki, other Hungarian historians vigorously denied this possibility in the same journal and elsewhere.

16. L. Zsigmond et al., eds., *Magyarország és a második világháború* (Hungary and the Second World War) (Budapest: Kossuth, 1966) 3rd edition, pp. 317f.

17. Gyula Gaál et al., "A Magyar repülés és légierők története, 1890-1945," (The history of Hungarian aviation and air forces) in Lajos Dálnoki Veress, ed., *Magyarország honvédelme a II világháború előtt és alatt, 1920-1945* (The defense of Hungary before and during the Second World War), I (Munich: published by the editor, 1972): 229f. Elsewhere in this volume (p. 139) a more traditional explanation is offered about the Kassa raid.

18. Ullein-Reviczky, *Guerre Allemande*, pp. 107f.

19. Vilmos Nagybaczoni Nagy, *Végzetes esztendők, 1938-1945* (Fateful years, 1938-1945) (Budapest: Kormendy, ca. 1946): 67-8.

20. See for example the recent work by László Zsigmondy, *A magyar 2. hadsereg mint a nemzetszocialista Német Birodalom segélyhada* (The 2nd Hungarian Army as Adjunct Force of the Third Reich) (Aachen: published by the author, 1981): 4.

21. Géza Lakatos, *Ahogyan én láttam* (As I saw it) (Munich: Aurora, 1981): 40-1.

22. My knowledge of the Szent-Iványi manuscript is indirect. It derives from the writings of Macartney (especially the Preface of his *October Fifteenth*, cit.), of Juhász (especially his preface to vol. 5 of the Hungarian diplomatic documents, cit.) and of Borsányi, in particular his article in *Magyar Élet* (Hungarian Life) (Toronto) May 9, 1981, p.9.

23. Nicholas Horthy, *Memoirs* (New York: Speller, 1957): 190-1. Excerpts from the Horthy memoirs are printed in Zsigmond et al., eds., *Magyarország*, pp. 337-9.

24. Borsányi, writing in *Magyar Élet*, see note 22 above.

25. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, II, chapters 3 and 4.

26. Ibid., pp. 53-4.

27. Mario D. Fenyő, *Hitler, Horthy and Hungary; German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972): 30.

28. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, II, p. 18.

29. See note 23 above.

30. See for example József Kun, "Magyarország második világháboruba való belépésének katona-politikai vonatkozásai," (The military-political aspects of Hungary's entry into the Second World War) *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* (Bulletin of Military History), 9, no. 1 (1962): 29-34; and György Ránki, "Magyarország belépése a második világháborúba," (Hungary's entry into the Second World War) *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 6, no. 2 (1959), pp.46ff. For an account by Krúdy himself see *Magyar Hírek* (Hungarian News), 14, nos. 23 and 24 (December 1 and 15, 1961).

31. The following is based on a written statement by Jenő Chirke (ca. 1962). I am indebted to Mr. Chirke for giving me a copy of this manuscript.

32. Foremost of all, by Joseph Ledényi of Toronto, who was a mechanic at the Kassa airfield at the time. For a list of other eyewitnesses I have contacted see my "New Twist," p. 232, note of acknowledgements.

33. Information from Dr. Wagner's paper above, and private information from Mr. Chirke.

34. *Képes Figyelő* (Illustrated Observer) late February, 1946. I am indebted to Mr. Chirke for giving me a clipping of this interview. For a published English translation of most of this report see the appendix to my article "Contradictory Evidence Concerning Hungary's Declaration of War on the USSR in June 1941," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 29, no. 4 (December 1977): 481-8.

35. Ibid., p. 488.

36. See, among others, the works mentioned in note 30 above.

37. Professor Sakmyster, Julian Borsányi, Joseph Ormay, and myself. For Sakmyster's views see his paper in this volume. For Borsányi's views see his various works cited above, and his *Die Rätsel des Bombenangriffs auf Kaschau* (Munich: Tropenik Verlag, 1978). A Hungarian version of this work has been serialized in *Magyar Élet* (Toronto) early in 1981. For Ormay's views (as well as comments by two eyewitnesses, and a text of the Chirke statement mentioned in note 31 above) see *Magyar Szárnyak*, 1978, pp. 35-48.

38. See note 34 above.

39. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, II, p. 303.

40. For some details of the Bárczy-Bárdossy rivalry and acrimony see ibid., p. 27, notes 2 and 3.

41. After the war, Bárdossy was tried for his "war crimes" and was executed.

42. A deputy, later speaker in the House of Deputies of Hungary's Parliament. Ferenc Krúdy lived out his long life in Canada. At the time my interest in the Kassa bombing was aroused during the later 1960s, I tried to obtain useful information from him on Ádám Krúdy's connection with this event, but was not successful.

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Part II
The Search for Peace

Introduction

The less than four years that separate the summer of 1941, when Hungary became involved in the war, and the spring of 1945, when the war ended, constitute one of the most fateful periods of modern Hungarian history. These years witnessed the loss of much of Hungary's youth, the country's occupation by German forces, the deportation and subsequent extermination of the majority of the Hungarian Jewry, the destruction of many of Hungary's cities, and finally, the imposition of an occupation regime by the Soviet Union. For convenience's sake, this momentous period may be divided into shorter time-spans coinciding with the administration of the men who headed Hungary's wartime governments. The first of these, the Bárdossy period, lasted from June of 1941 to March, 1942. This was followed by the two years of Miklós Kállay's premiership. Then came Döme Sztójay's term in office (March-August, 1944), followed by the short-lived government of Géza Lakatos (August-October, 1944). Finally, the last months of the war saw the regime of Ferenc Szálasi.

While Prime Ministers came and went in Hungary, the dominant figure of the country's historical evolution until 15 October 1944 was Miklós Horthy, the Regent. Although he probably did not relish this exalted role, the crises brought on by the war had thrust him into a position of increasing influence and enabled him to command more respect and awe than did any other Hungarian inside or outside the country. In reality then, a periodization of Hungary's wartime history would be more accurate if it were based on the twists and turns of Horthy's political outlook rather than on who headed the government. This is especially true of the last seven months of his regime when he was no longer always able to exert influence over the composition of his government due to increased meddling by the Germans.

While the principal figure of the Hungarian political scene in 1941-44 was Horthy, the dominant political issue was the question of participation in the war. Every Hungarian public figure in this period felt compelled to weigh the pros and cons of this issue, and come to some decision on the desired nature and extent of this participation. Most of them were eventually forced—by their own consciences or as a result of pressure from others—to grapple even with the question of ending their country's involvement in the war altogether.

The essays in this part of this special volume deal with various aspects of wartime Hungary's quest for the curtailment of the country's participation in the war. The history of this quest has been told before.[1] Thus most of its details are known. Nevertheless, a survey of its highlights might be useful as an introduction for the lay reader or as a review for the professional historian.

As has been pointed out in the introduction to the first part of this volume, most of Hungary's leaders never really relished the thought of making common cause with Germany in a European war. One of them, Pál Teleki, even took his own life to protest the prospect of his country abandoning the policy of neutrality. Notwithstanding Teleki's sacrifice, the policy of non-involvement in Germany's military ventures was abandoned by Hungary, above all in the decision of June, 1941 to join the war against the Soviet Union. The extraordinary circumstances of that decision have been discussed in detail in Part I of this volume.

The wisdom of joining the war, not adequately considered in those crises-ridden days of June, 1941, was soon questioned by Hungary's leaders. Even before the Germans suffered any serious reverses, some of Hungary's leaders realized that the decision to enter the war was a mistake, and began devoting their energies to devising plans for dissociating Hungary from the Axis war effort. This soul-searching among Hungary's leaders, and especially by Horthy, coincides with the Bárdossy period mentioned above. It resulted in an important decision that manifested itself above all in changes in the composition of the country's civilian and military leadership. By the end of this period, the chief architects of Hungary's involvement in the war, László Bárdossy and Henrik Werth, were no longer in office.[2]

If the months of Bárdossy's wartime administration constitute the gestation period of the Hungarian decision to reverse the

country's war policy, the two years of Miklós Kállay's rule can be characterized as the time of search for the ways and means of implementing that decision. In the final analysis, this search was unsuccessful. Ideas regarding the limiting and even ending of the Hungarian war effort were plentiful, but their implementation more often than not proved very difficult. Obstacles to disengagement were numerous: the most formidable were the strategic realities. As long as all or most of East Central Europe was firmly in the hands of the *Wehrmacht*, there could be no Hungarian defection from the Axis, the most Hungary could do was to reduce her support of the German war machine. Another major obstacle was the attainment of some kind of an agreement with the Allies. Part of the problem was arranging and conducting secret negotiations with Allied representatives. Another was the fact that the Allies spoke with many voices. Then there was the phenomenon of the Hungarians making what they considered to be significant moves toward disengagement, only to be told that what they had done was not enough to earn the respect of the Allied governments.

Frustrated by these obstacles, the Kállay government made only limited gains in its quest to redefine the Hungarian involvement in the war. Limited though these gains were when seen through the eyes of those who expected a complete turn-about in Hungary's allegiance, they represent a remarkable feat of political maneuvering when seen in the context of the general European situation of the time. Perhaps the most important of the Kállay government's achievements was the cessation of hostilities with the Western Allies. British and American aircraft, for example, could fly over Hungarian territory undisturbed. In return, Hungary was spared strategic bombing for the time being. A change came on the Russian front also. There, what was left of the Hungarian forces after the winter of 1942-43 were withdrawn from fighting and were assigned to occupation duties. Other concessions by the Kállay regime were Hungarian help to Yugoslav partisans, and favourable treatment of British and American POWs who had escaped to Hungary from German camps. On the home front, Kállay's policy of gradual dissociation from the war manifested itself in a liberal treatment of opposition elements, of refugees from German-controlled lands and, relatively speaking, of Hungarian Jews. As a culmination of its policies, the Kállay

administration became involved in a scheme calling for Allied paratroops landing in Hungary, and a decision to order home all Hungarian units from Russia.

Not surprisingly Hitler learned of these plans and his patience ran out with the ever-reluctant and "double-dealing" Hungarians. He decided to invade Hungary and to occupy her in conjunction with Rumania and other Axis satellites. In the end cooler heads prevailed in Berlin and the planned invasion was not put into effect. Instead, Hungary's leaders were summoned to Salzburg and were told that as long as they complied with the German government's wishes their country's invasion and dismemberment by its neighbours could be avoided. Even before the Salzburg discussions were concluded, German troops poured into Hungary effecting a quick and practically bloodless occupation.

Among the conditions imposed on occupied Hungary were the appointment of a government acceptable to Hitler, and the "solution" of Hungary's Jewish question according to German wishes. Döme Sztójay, a former Hungarian minister to Berlin, was appointed Prime Minister. Next, the round-up and deportation of Jews was started under the watchful eyes of "experts" from Germany headed by Adolf Eichmann.

In the spring and early summer of 1944 it seemed that the last had been seen of the Hungarian plans to leave the Axis. In the second half of the summer, however, these hopes were reborn, mainly as a result of a further deterioration of Germany's strategic position. The first significant development was Horthy's decision to abandon his self-imposed (since the start of the German occupation) withdrawal from politics, and to intervene personally in the deportation of the Jews. As a result, the Jews of Budapest escaped the horrible fate that befell their less fortunate co-religionists in Hungary's provinces.[3] Next, Horthy replaced Sztójay with General Géza Lakatos whose secret task was to effect Hungary's defection from the Axis.

From the very start, the Hungarians' expectations were disappointed. They kept hoping for divisions of British and American paratroopers to land in Western Hungary, and they wanted a negotiated armistice. They were told that sending Western forces to Hungary was out of the question and that a Hungarian surrender had to be unconditional. In the end, the Lakatos government began secret armistice negotiations with the Russians.

While one group of Hungarians was preparing the defection, another group conspired with the Germans to effect a wholesale change in Hungary's leadership. In the end, it was this German-backed group which succeeded.[4] Within hours after the announcement of the armistice, Horthy and his associates were driven from power and the government was entrusted to Ferenc Szálasi and his Arrow Cross Party. With this ended the Hungarian quest to terminate involvement in the war through action from above. From this time on, Hungarians opposed to the German alliance could look only to outright resistance as a means of accelerating the process of their country's liberation.

The histories of Germany's wartime satellites are usually discussed in terms of resistance and collaboration. This approach proves simplistic and not very useful in the case of the Hungary where, in a sense, some of the chief collaborators were also the chief resisters. Of course, even within the country's leadership it is possible to identify people who favoured closer collaboration with Germany, and those who opposed, to various degrees, participation in the war. Indeed, many Hungarian leaders made the transition from collaboration to being opponents of it, and a few behaved in a highly opportunistic fashion and changed their position according to the dictates of the moment.[5] Considering these facts, the application of the term resistance in its most commonly used sense—the one that conjures up images of saboteurs and gun-toting partisans—to the Hungarian case does not appear useful. In the Hungarian context it seems far more appropriate to equate resistance with opposition to collaboration. Considered from such a perspective, the wartime history of Hungary reveals a complexity that belies the simplistic image of the country as Germany's subservient, "last satellite."

What is true in this respect of Hungary's wartime leadership, is true also of the country's population. Undoubtedly, most Hungarians were ill-at-ease about the war. It is also true that they were generally wary about seeing their country transformed from being a reluctant German satellite to being a rebellious one, as this involved far too many risks. In any case a popular rebellion against collaboration made little sense throughout most of the war since during the Prime Ministership of Kállay, and again under Lakatos, there were repeated rumours of an impending deal with the Allies and defection from the Axis. Of

course, for a while after the German occupation, and again after the Szálasi takeover, resistance must have seemed more logical, and indeed it did increase as some of the essays in this volume point out. But for much of the wartime experience of Hungary, active resistance was confined to groups that on the whole had no faith in the desire of the country's leaders to be anything but Germany's loyal agents. As such groups, including the communists, were very small and uninfluential, Hungary's active resistance movement was feeble until the final phases of the war.[6]

The lack of an effective resistance movement did not mean that all elements of Hungarian society endorsed the Horthy regime's policy of reluctant collaboration. In fact the Kállay government's practice of treating with both the Germans and the Allies was commonly referred to as the *Kállay-kettős*, a play-on-words on *kállói-kettős*, the double dance of Kálló, a folkdance from Kállay's home county. Some groups, such as opposition politicians, populist writers and concerned churchmen, favoured a more determined effort to dissociate Hungary from Germany. Their activities only widened as the crises of 1944 swept the country. The effectiveness of their work was hindered by the mass arrests that were carried out by German security units (and their Hungarian collaborators) after the German occupation and again after the Szálasi *coup* seven months later.

One of the papers in this part of our special volume deals with an aspect of the resistance instituted by Hungary's government. In this study, Professor Istvan Mocsy examines the Kállay cabinet's efforts to reach an agreement with the British regarding Hungary's defection from the Axis. He points out that while unrealistic conditions insisted on by the Hungarian government made progress in the negotiations difficult, in the end the quest for a deal with the Western Allies failed because it was not in the interest of the Soviets, who were able to frustrate Hungarian aspirations. Professor Mocsy concludes that both in this matter and in the settlement of the postwar fate of East Central Europe, it was not the "conduct or desires" of the small nations that mattered, "but the interests and the power alignment of the Great Powers."

The three papers that follow Professor Mocsy's work deal with the opposition to collaboration that was generated by three important elements of Hungarian society: the Churches, the

intelligentsia and the students. The first of these studies examines the attitudes of Hungary's Churches to National Socialism and the German war. According to Professor Leslie Laszlo, the study's author, the leaders of Hungary's Churches were alerted to the danger of German Nazi influence as a result of the treatment the Christian Churches received in the Third Reich. Hungary's concerned churchmen reacted to the danger first by seeking greater cooperation between the Catholic and Protestant Churches. At the same time, many churchmen condemned the teachings of National Socialism in books, pamphlets and in religious periodicals. Under a deeply religious and anti-Nazi Prime Minister like Pál Teleki, the Churches collaborated with the government in countering radical right-wing propaganda. Still another sphere of anti-Nazi activity for the Church was the combatting of the ever-increasing influence of German Nazi ideas among Hungary's ethnic German population. [7]

In the next paper, Professor Mario Fenyo, the author of a major monograph on wartime Hungarian-German relations, [8] discusses the subject of resistance among the Hungarian intelligentsia. Like the leaders of Hungary's churches, the country's intellectuals, in particular several young populist writers, perceived the Nazi threat early and tried to counteract it by emphasizing in their writings Hungarian values and traditions, and the need to preserve Hungary's independence. They also continued to advocate social reform and published periodicals for the dissemination of their ideas. All this was usually done with caution, Fenyo argues, without open denunciation of the war and the German alliance. Hungary's intellectuals, like their more conservative counterparts in the political establishment, preferred methods of peaceful opposition to those involving open confrontation.

The last of the three studies dealing with particular elements of wartime Hungary's society examines a group closely linked — both temperamentally and professionally — to the intellectuals: the country's students. In an autobiographical essay, Professor Janos Horvath relates his recollections of the 1944 Hungarian student movement for independence. It is with this paper that we at last get descriptions of resistance activities in the tradition of the struggles of German-occupied, subjugated territories. Horvath describes clandestine organizational work, attempts at illicit

publishing, police raids, arrests, interrogations and, in the case of the lucky few such as Horvath himself, escapes. His account also speaks of heroism as well as youthful naiveté on the part of university and college students who conspired against a ruthless occupying power (and its local agents) in the name of national independence. In the end, the defeat of the Germans and their Arrow Cross allies was brought about not by the students (and other members of the resistance) but by the Red Army, which arrived at the gates of Budapest just as Horvath was being tormented by his captors for information on his associates. Horvath's paper completes the series of essays which has taken the story from Hungary's drifting toward war, to the capture of Budapest in the winter of 1944-45. These papers are followed in an appendix-like fashion by a documentary article in which Professor Laszlo analyses and presents excerpts from the diaries of one of wartime Hungary's most prominent men, Prince Primate Cardinal Jusztinián Serédi. This evidence, Dr. Laszlo argues, helps to dispel the charge made by some historians that Hungary's Churches collaborated with the Germans and failed to serve the cause of peace. Professor Laszlo's documentary study is in turn followed by reviews of books dealing with or touching on Hungary's involvement in the Second World War.

As an epilogue to the story of Hungary's futile quest for a timely end to involvement in war, a few words should be said about the peace that eventually awaited her at the end of the road that she had travelled since 1941. It must be noted in this connection that Hungary's ultimate fate was influenced in part by two factors. One of these was Hungarian participation in the war on Germany's side, while the other was the fact that two of the country's neighbours—Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia—were considered to be Allied powers. As significant territorial adjustments at the expense of victorious powers were unlikely, the possibility of territorial rearrangement in the Carpathian Basin boiled down to the question of the future of Transylvania. As has been seen in Professor Mocsy's paper, in 1943 the British were inclined to favour Hungarian claims to much of that land, or were willing to allow the re-establishment of an independent Transylvania. It is also known that the United States State Department at times also expressed similar sentiments.[9] Unfortunately for Hungary, however, the country that had most to say about postwar frontiers in the Carpathian Basin was

neither Britain nor the United States, but the Soviet Union.

While the British and the Americans could almost look upon the territorial division of the Carpathian Basin as a theoretical question, the Russians considered this issue to be vital to their interests. They no doubt considered this region to be a possible staging area for any future attack on their country, and believed that one part of it—Subcarpathia—could serve as a "Piedmont" for Ukrainian irredentism. For these reasons they, and above all Stalin, maintained keen interest in this issue throughout the war.

Soviet aspirations in the Carpathian Basin can be divided into two categories. In some areas the Russians had direct interests, elsewhere they hoped to exercise indirect control. Into the former category belonged Subcarpathia with its majority Ruthenian population. It has been argued that Stalin had designs on this land already in 1939.[10]

A region of intense, though indirect, interest to the Soviets was Transylvania. On the future of this land Russian pronouncements kept shifting during the war. In 1940, when Moscow asserted its claims to certain Rumanian territories (the old Russian province of Bessarabia and other regions), the Soviets encouraged the Hungarians in their machinations to regain Transylvania. A friendly Russian attitude toward Hungarian revisionism continued for some time and survived even Hungary's joining of the German-Italian-Japanese Tripartite Pact in November of 1940.[11] But good relations between Hungary and the USSR, born mainly out of common hostility toward Rumania, did not last much longer. They were weakened when Budapest assumed a role in the German invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, and were shattered when Hungary entered the war two months later. During the years that followed, Soviet plans regarding Hungary evolved partly as a result of consultations with Eduard Benes of the Czechoslovak government in exile. These plans called for the occupation of Hungary by Soviet troops alone, the detachment from Hungary of the lands she had regained between 1937 and 1941, and the expulsion of Hungarians from these and other regions. If there were doubts in Moscow about the future of Transylvania, these were dispelled when Rumania managed to effect a turnabout in her allegiance but Hungary could not.[12] The British and the Americans did make some efforts to influence the outcome of events but these proved too feeble. As is known, the British

suggestion to establish a democratic federation in East Central Europe (with possible Transylvanian membership) was effectively opposed by the Soviets, as was Churchill's 1943 plan to send Western troops into the Middle Danube region from the south. Mainly because of their military successes, the Soviets were able to achieve the region's postwar reorganization single-handedly.

The new territorial arrangement was legalized by a number of international agreements. The Soviet-Hungarian Armistice of early 1945 re-established Hungary's frontiers in the North, East and South as they had been in 1937. Next, a Czechoslovak-Soviet agreement gave Subcarpathia to the USSR. The final settlement, in terms of a peace treaty with Hungary, was slower to come about, and at times the impression was created in Moscow that Hungary had the right to bargain, but in the end all Hungarian pleas for favourable consideration of Hungary's territorial and ethnic interests were disregarded and the Trianon dictum was officially reimposed on the country with one minor exception—a border adjustment in favour of Czechoslovakia.[13] The pain caused by this settlement to Hungarians was aggravated by the treatment given to co-nationals in the neighbouring states. In Czechoslovakia, for example, their property was confiscated and they were deprived of their citizenship (and the rights that went with it). Moreover, many of them were expelled from Czechoslovakia, or were deported to remote regions of it.

The reasons for this harsh treatment of Hungary by the Soviets (and their East Central European allies) were numerous. The "unprovoked aggression" of Hungarians against the USSR had probably little to do with it. The Soviet decision to award Transylvania to Rumania, for example, was influenced in part by Moscow's acquisition of some of that country's eastern provinces. Through gaining territories in the West, Rumania's communist-controlled government could ward off the wrath of the masses displeased by the losses in the East.[14] In Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia too, Stalin expected pro-Soviet governments to emerge after the war, while for some time he was not sure that the same would happen in Hungary. Accordingly, Stalin was much more eager to appease those countries than Hungary. As regards the West's inability to influence the unfolding new territorial order in East Central Europe, it must be kept in mind that Western military leaders were most reluctant to see wrangles over future boundaries in that part of Europe interfere with the

effective prosecution of the Allied war effort.[15] And by the time the war had ended, the Soviets were in complete control of the Carpathian area and the West's influence there had diminished even further. In this manner, peace did come to Hungary in the end. It was a "hostile peace" as one commentator has put it,[16] one that probably exceeded in its harshness the most pessimistic premonitions Hungarians may have had about their future during the war.

N.F. Dreisziger

NOTES

1. Most ably by C.A. Macartney in his *October Fifteenth; A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), especially vol. 2.
2. These two men are most often blamed for Hungary's entry into the war. The question of responsibility is more complex than it is sometimes suggested, and has been discussed in Part I of this volume. By early 1942 Horthy blamed Bárdossy for Hungary's involvement, forgetting conveniently that in June of 1941 he himself had failed to exercise adequate caution.
3. This subject is discussed in a study by Professor Leslie Laszlo, "The Role of the Christian Churches in the Rescue of the Budapest Jews," that will appear in one of the 1984 issues of our journal.
4. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, vol. 2, chapters 18 and 19. Also, Peter Gosztonyi, "Horthy, Hitler and the Hungary of 1944," *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies*, II (1975): 43-58.
5. For example, General János Vörös, who during the fall of 1944 worked in turn for Horthy, the Germans and finally the Russians.
6. Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary from Kun to Kadar* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institute Press, 1979), chapter 6.
7. The subject of the radicalization of Hungary's German minority on the eve of World War II will be explored in one of the forthcoming issues of our journal by Professor Thomas Spira in a paper: "The Radicalization of Hungary's Swabian Minority after 1935."
8. Mario D. Fenyo, *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary; German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972).
9. Bennett Kovrig, "A Hostile Peace: The Disposition of Hungary's Territorial and Ethnic Interests, 1944-1947," p. 5. This paper is scheduled for publication in a volume of essays collected by Professor Stephen Borsody. I am indebted to Professor Kovrig for a copy of his manuscript.
10. Peter Pastor, "Hungary and Rumania in Professor Mastny's *Russia*'s Road to the Cold War," p. 7. This paper is scheduled for presentation at the forthcoming meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. I am indebted to Professor Pastor for letting me see this manuscript.
11. Ibid., pp. 9f.
12. Ibid., pp. 13f. See also Kovrig's paper, pp. 7f.
13. Pastor, p. 2l; Kovrig's paper, pp. 9-13.
14. Professor Mastny cited by Pastor, p. 20.
15. Kovrig, "A Hostile Peace," p. 8.
16. Professor Kovrig, *idem*.

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Hungary Amidst the Great Powers: Documents of the Failed 1943 Peace Mission

Istvan Mocsy

The secret peace negotiation of 1943 between Hungary and Great Britain was a feeble attempt by a small state, caught amidst the warring Great Powers, to regain control of its destiny. Hungary was provoked into making the peace initiative by the sagging military fortunes of Germany. After the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942 doubts strengthened in Budapest about the ultimate outcome of the war, which, after the German defeat at Stalingrad and the subsequent destruction of the Second Hungarian Army at the Don during January and February of 1943, hardened into a conviction that the war was lost. The Hungarian Prime Minister, Miklós Kállay, as well as the Regent, Admiral Miklós Horthy, realized that if Hungary was to avoid paying the full penalty due for joining Germany in war, she must extricate herself from the conflict at the earliest possible moment. As a result, during late 1942 and early 1943, their unofficial representatives established contact with the British Foreign Office and maintained them until Germany finally occupied the country on March 19, 1944.

The Hungarian leaders' interest in the details of the negotiations was always keen. Although the negotiations had only a negligible direct impact on the course of the war, the policies of the Hungarian leaders were influenced by the hopes they attached to the discussions. In fact, they are the key to an understanding of Hungary's war-time conduct. Also, during the postwar accounting for war crimes some of the former leaders of Hungary used the secret negotiations with Britain as proof of their opposition to Hitler. A lack of adequate documentation, however, prevented a complete reconstruction of the incident and a clear assessment of the reasons for the failure of the negotiations. Built upon circumstantial evidence, earlier accounts of the negotiations picture them to be much more complex and imply that their chances of success were greater

than was the case in reality. Most early accounts of the incident, written without the use of the key documents, were based upon secondhand information on the recollections of the involved Hungarian officials and particularly upon the memoirs of Kállay.[1] Such evidence, however, could be challenged as self-serving and subjective, or at least as being based upon a perception of events that was necessarily altered by the passage of time and a retrospective viewpoint. The pertinent Hungarian documents are permanently lost: soon after the German invasion of the country, to protect the participating officials and diplomats, they were destroyed.

The collection of documents entitled *Magyar-brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* (Hungarian-British Secret Negotiations), edited by Gyula Juhász, fills this void.[2] It contains over one hundred documents selected from the archives of the British Foreign Office: reports by British diplomats from the various neutral capitals of Europe on contacts with Hungarians, documents which were sent to Britain by representatives of the Hungarian government and notes prepared by officials of the Foreign Office for internal use. For over thirty years these papers, now deposited in the Public Record Office, were classified and thus unavailable to scholars. Together they correct some of the earlier Hungarian misconceptions about Western reception of the peace feelers and help to assess the importance of roles played by some of the participants. Above all, they permit an accurate reconstruction of both the underlying Hungarian reasoning which led to the negotiations and the policies of the British and other Allied powers towards East Central Europe. The meticulous editorial work of Juhász, his explanatory notes and the extensive cross referencing help to measure the relative weight and significance of each document and to link them together to form a coherent and even an exciting narrative of the incident.

The documents are introduced by Juhász in a lengthy essay on Hungary's pre-war foreign policy and on the history of the peace negotiations. In its thoroughness, precision and objectivity, it is typical of the quality of scholarship we have become accustomed to expect from the best scholars of Hungary. It provides an outline of Hungary's foreign policy prior to the war and the connecting information that is needed for an understanding of the context of the negotiations. Juhász also offers a complex

analysis of the motivations and objectives of the Hungarian leaders, the reactions of the major Western powers and the Soviet Union and finally weighs the chances of success of the initiative.

As a whole, the book gives us a clear example of the extreme difficulties the foreign policy makers of the small states of East Central Europe had to face both before and especially during the war. Here we can highlight only some of those difficulties which arose from the system itself within which Hungary and the other states of the region had to operate.

Operating within the international political order that was created after the First World War, the small states could rarely pursue a rational and independent foreign policy based upon principles or self-interest and especially not when those policies conflicted with the interests of the Great Powers. From the point of view of the small states, the system itself was flawed.

In creating a new order the architects of the Paris Peace Treaties wished to achieve a number of ends. Among others, they wished to prevent a rebirth of German militarism, to isolate the Soviet Union and, in general, to arrest the spread of socialist ideologies and the revolutionary movements. In short, they aimed to keep East Central Europe free from both German and Soviet economic and political influence. They also hoped to draw the newly created East Central European states into Western economic and political orbit and to provide for the security of all states under the umbrella of collective security. What the system lacked were means of orderly and peaceful change and guarantees that the vital interests of all states, large or small, defeated or victorious in the last war, would be equally protected. Not surprisingly, aside from its counterrevolutionary purpose, the settlement was not successful it failed to prevent the resurgence of Germany or to provide security for East Central Europe. At best it could temporarily uphold the *status quo* and enforce the decisions of the Western powers against the small states. But the system was unable to restrict the actions of Great Powers, who could always escape from the constraints of the system by resorting to power politics. The small states, on the other hand, could act in their own interest only as appanages of a Great Power and at times at a cost to their independence. The alternative was either suicidal heroism or petty Machiavellism. In other words, collective security became a myth and the system of tangled alliances reemerged, a system that left the small states

impotent and exposed to the manipulations of the Great Powers.

Viewed from the perspectives of the genuine economic and security needs of the peoples of East Central Europe, the principal weakness of the postwar system was due to the break-up—as opposed to the reform—of the Central European Empire of the Habsburgs. By permitting the fragmentation of the area into jealously competing small states, the peoples of the region were deprived of the means through which to uncover and defend their real regional interests. Each of them necessarily became preoccupied with security or with territorial claims. Thus the collective strength of the area was neutralized and all of the East Central European states became vulnerable. Moreover, divided and preoccupied with their military security and national ambitions, the social and economic development of virtually every one of those states was arrested.

In the case of Hungary, the dismemberment of the country in 1919 and the injustices of the territorial settlement fixed in the Treaty of Trianon greatly aided the defeat of the progressive, democratic and anti-nationalist elements. As a result, throughout the interwar period, the driving force behind Hungarian foreign policy was nationalism and its aim, the destruction of the Treaty and the restoration of at least some of the lost Hungarian territories. (See the study by S.B. Vardy.) Those goals put Hungary at odds with most of the East Central European states, however, and prevented a collective defense of the region against external dangers. First Italy and then Germany were willing to support Hungary's revisionist policies, but German ambitions also endangered Hungary's independence. On the eve of the Second World War this contradiction confronted the Hungarian foreign policy makers with a difficult choice. The conservative Hungarian leadership and a substantial segment of the middle classes favoured a pro-British orientation, but such a policy failed to produce tangible results for the country. The result was an ambivalent policy.

Unable to formulate and then pursue a clear line of policy, Hungarian actions came to depend upon an uncertain assessment of the future policies and probable actions of the Great Powers and upon the anticipated outcome of the struggle between them. Not surprisingly, during the late thirties and early forties, this led to a series of foreign policy miscalculations as Hungary's expectations of international developments were repeatedly

violated. Contrary to Hungarian expectations the Western powers failed to react to the re-militarization of the Rhineland and in 1938, to the annexation of Austria. Hungary, anxious to prevent the extension of the Reich's frontiers to her borders, was perhaps the only country to contemplate military aid to Austria.[3]

Fears of further German expansion and anticipations of a sharp Western response in the next crisis made Hungary inclined to temporarily forego her territorial ambitions and to normalize relations with the threatened Czechoslovakia in the Bled agreement.[4] Western capitulation to Hitler at the Munich conference came as a complete surprise. Hungary also refused to aid Germany against Poland and was dismayed at the ineffectiveness of the Western military effort and especially by the ease of the defeat of France. Not surprisingly, the phenomenal initial German successes against the Soviet Union in 1941 at least momentarily shook the faith of even the most optimistic believers in an Allied victory.[5] Seduced by the illusory German successes, Hungary abandoned its neutral stance to join Germany in war against the Soviet Union. That was the final miscalculation which proved to be disastrous to both the Hungarian leaders and to the country as a whole. The replacement of the pro-German Bárdossy with Kállay in March 1942 indicates that Horthy himself realized the folly of that move. Gradually, Kállay began to resist the repeated German demands to increase Hungary's economic and military contribution to the war effort, he also began to manoeuvre so as to regain control of the country's foreign policy. But all of the policy options were hedged with danger.

The short term threat came from Germany and from the ultra-right wing domestic opponents of the regime. If sufficiently provoked Germany could occupy the country and install a subservient government drawn from the various factions of the extreme right. But to remain allied to Germany and to increase Hungary's sacrifices in the war held an even greater, long term danger. What the conservative leaders of the country feared most was the prospect of a Soviet victory and Soviet domination of Hungary, which was certain to result in a domestic revolution and a takeover of the government by the left. It was considered not beyond the realm of the impossible that in a peace treaty Hungary would be dismembered[6] or even absorbed by a greatly

expanded Soviet state. Even in the best of circumstances, they feared, the recently recovered territories might be lost once again. The Allied invasion of North Africa seemed to have opened an escape route from all the dangers. But it was a narrow path which could be travelled only if the Western Allies vigorously pursued a Mediterranean and Balkan strategy. If a victory in Africa was quickly followed by a massive invasion of the Balkans, the Allies could have reached Hungary's frontiers long before the Soviets. That such a strategy was in the best interests of the Western powers was taken for granted, no one could believe in Budapest that the West would yield East Central Europe to the Soviet Union without a fight. [7] The opening of secret negotiations with Britain reflected these hopes and Kállay's desire to be prepared for the exploitation of such fortuitous turn of events. But once again, as prior to the war, the success or failure of Hungarian policies depended very little on the positive actions of the country, though it should be noted that the regime did less than was within its powers.

During the initial contacts with British officials the representatives of the Hungarian government indicated that Hungary was ready to open peace negotiations and, at the time when the armies of the Western powers reached Hungary, to open the frontiers to them. [8] Moreover, the Hungarian leaders were eager to convince the West that their economic and military contribution to the German war effort was made under duress, [9] and in any case it was of limited nature. In fact, Hungary's contribution was intentionally held to the minimum that was judged to be necessary to preserve the country's independence and to ward off a German military occupation. The Allies also learned that Horthy was determined to keep Hungary's best military units intact and within the country's boundaries so as to guarantee the success of Hungary's planned switch to the Allied side. This was a tempting offer, potentially of great strategic value, though neither Great Britain nor her allies were eager to pay the price that Hungary wished to extract.

The various Hungarian memoranda which reached the British Foreign Office make it clear that the Hungarian leaders' prime objective was the preservation of the conservative economic, social and political order. [10] Integrally connected to that goal was the exclusion of the Soviet Union from East Central Europe. In fact, Germany presented a lesser threat to the regime than the

Soviet Union and, therefore, Germany's defeat on the Eastern Front was not desirable until the Western forces reached the Hungarian frontiers. [11] It did not escape the eyes of the British officials that in approaching Great Britain and offering to surrender to the Western powers, Hungary wished not only to encourage a Balkan strategy, but also to drive a wedge between Britain and the Soviet Union. [12] The Hungarian leaders assumed that the ideological differences between East and West were only temporarily suppressed, and would once again surface when the bond of a fighting common enemy was broken and a new political order that was to be imposed upon East Central Europe had to be decided. The Hungarians pointedly reminded the British that Hungary was engaging in active hostilities only against communism and the Soviet Union, [13] while thousands of Allied soldiers, escaping from German prisoner-of-war camps, Polish soldiers and civilian refugees and Jews were well treated once they reached Hungary. [14] Through such arguments the regime tried to rehabilitate itself in Western eyes and to assure that in a postwar redrawing of the map of East Central Europe Hungary's legitimate territorial claims would not be ignored. They were particularly anxious about the fate of Transylvania. The documents repeatedly returned to this subject and pointed out that the division of that province in the Second Vienna Award, due to the hostile disposition of Germany towards Hungary, actually favoured Rumania. [15] A fairer division would have been a return to Hungary of territories north of the Maros River line, but ideally, due to Transylvania's historical ties with Hungary and to its natural geographic and economic links to the Danubian basin, it should have been rejoined intact with Hungary. [16] If neither of these solutions were practicable, Hungary would have preferred an independent Transylvania. [17]

British policy toward Hungary was always filled with ambiguities. Though at times sympathetic to Hungarian efforts to stay out of German orbit, British commitment to the East Central European enemies of Hungary prevented a close cooperation between the two countries. The British documents frequently acknowledge that of the East Central European states only Hungary managed to preserve its old parliamentary form, a multi-party system, which still allowed a functioning of the Social Democratic Party, a relatively free press and the trade unions. [18]

But already in 1940 Britain informed the Hungarian government that "since Hungary can render us no service in the war, it is not worth our while to make any sacrifices on her behalf."[19] Until 1943 British policy did not differentiate between Germany and her satellites. The initial reaction to the peace overtures, therefore, was a contemptuous rebuff "as long as Hungary continues to make war on our allies and supports the Axis, she can count on neither help nor mercy."[20] In February 1943 British policy began to change, for, as Alexander Cadogan put it, "it seems to me that in the present critical phase for Germany, anything that we can do to make the satellite states more of an embarrassment to Germany would be all to the good."[21] It should be noted that in both instances, in 1940 as well as in 1943, the telling argument for adopting a specific policy was expediency and self-interest and not abstract principles or even the specific behaviour of Hungary.

After February 1943 British attitude softened towards Hungary. The British government was willing to dispel Hungarian fears about a new dismemberment of their country and, as Eden noted, Britain did not intend to punish the Hungarian people for the follies of their leaders.[22] On the all important territorial issue, Britain differentiated between Hungarian claims against states allied with the West and those made against another satellite of Germany. Hungary was expected to give up the territories she gained from Britain's Czechoslovakian and Yugoslav allies, but the British showed some sensitivity to the Hungarian position even in those cases.[23] According to Churchill, Hungary simply had to trust in the fairness and good will of Britain.[24] On the surface, Britain showed disinterest and impartiality over the disposition of Transylvania and a capacity to understand the complexity of the issues involved. In her policies, however, she also showed her duplicity.

In general the Hungarian-Rumanian dispute was at times an irritant to the Great Powers, to Germany and the Allies alike, especially when it deflected those countries from concentrating against the true enemy and when it prevented them from marching in locked steps with them. Often, Transylvania was used as a bait to induce one or the other to do the bidding of a Great Power.

In 1940, at the time of the Second Vienna Award, the British

government, in an attempt to make mischief for Germany, sided with Rumania, refused to recognize the Award and urged the Rumanians to resist.[25] At the same time, Britain applauded Bulgaria's seizure of Dobruja from Rumania. In September 1940 Hungary was thrown a conciliatory bone in Parliament when Churchill announced that he has "never been happy about the way in which Hungary was treated after the last war."[26] Churchill may have expressed his genuine beliefs, but those could not interfere with the pragmatic interests of a Great Power. By 1943, Britain saw no advantage in supporting Rumania and became more sympathetic to Hungary, not as much because on the whole Rumania "behaved much worse than Hungary," but because of an increasing Soviet interest in Rumania.[27] The internal working papers of the Foreign Office began to indicate that Britain expected to redraw the borders between the two countries in favour of Hungary or perhaps, as the most equitable solution, to push for the reestablishment of an independent Transylvania.[28]

Even before the outbreak of the war, Britain was aware of the failure of the international order that was established in 1919. In some measure the concessions made at the time of the Munich crisis were made to correct some of its specific errors. The breakdown of the security system, the failure of the Western powers to fulfill their obligations under the old system of guarantees and the inability of the small states of Central Europe to defend themselves against a Great Power, forced the British policy makers to draw up plans for a new order and a new state system. They turned to the idea of a federalized East Central Europe and under its sponsorship various emigre governments in London agreed to link their states after the war. The Polish-Czechoslovak union was to form the core of a Central European Federation and the Greek-Yugoslav merger that of a Balkan union.

In December 1942 Eden held out the possibility that Austria and Hungary might join the future Central European Federation.[29] The existence of these plans allowed Hungary to assume that Britain and the Western powers did not intend to concede the region to the Soviet Union. Already in 1940 the former Hungarian Prime Minister, Count István Bethlen, in a long secret memorandum to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, analyzed the prospects of the various possible combinations for a

federal state and came to the conclusion that Hungary's interests would be best protected by a union of Poland, Rumania, an independent Transylvania and Hungary, after the return of Slovakia and some of the Yugoslavian territories.[30] Such a state, with a population of 60 million people and with Italian and Western support, would form a bulwark against both Germany and the Soviet Union. During the war, with some variations, these plans were repeated,[31] but each contained the idea, as a British official put it, of an expanded and strengthened Hungary surrounded by its satellites of Croatia, Slovakia and Transylvania, ruling over the Carpathian basin and in alliance with Poland defending "Christian Democracy."[32] Hungary, however, expressed strong reservations about a union in which her power would be reduced due to a preponderance of Slavic nations.[33]

The political preconditions set by the Hungarian government, the territorial demands and the reservations about a future federated state made the negotiations more difficult. But Hungary's hopes and British plans were shipwrecked on the interests and strength of another Great Power, the Soviet Union. The position of the Soviets was unambiguous. They rigidly opposed negotiations with Hungary until they themselves were in such a military position as to direct the course of events. Since 1919 the Horthy regime was one of the most outspoken opponents of the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly relations between the two countries were always cool. Nevertheless, in June 1941 Molotov informed the Hungarian government that the Soviet Union had no specific observations to make on the Second Vienna Award[34] and, if Hungary remained neutral, the Soviet Union would support her claims in Transylvania.[35] After Hungary had joined Germany against the Soviet Union, Stalin's attitude changed dramatically. Already in 1941 he expressed the view that Hungary must be punished by extending both the Czechoslovak and Rumanian frontiers at her expense.[36] In June 1943 in a letter to the British Ambassador, Molotov echoed those sentiments when he stated that for assisting and for the crimes committed against the Soviet people not only the Hungarian government, but the Hungarian people also must be held responsible.[37]

Rumania was also an ally of Germany, and she participated in the war against the Soviet Union with greater enthusiasm than Hungary. Yet the Soviet attitudes towards Rumania did not

harden, which suggests that Stalin's anger against Hungary was political in nature. He intended to draw Rumania into the Soviet orbit, to protect her against Hungary and to gain new military and naval bases for the Soviet Union.[38] A Rumanian state possessing Transylvania, out of fear of Hungarian attack, would be a more willing ally. In any event, since both Hungary and Rumania waged war only against the Soviet Union, Stalin believed that the final decision on the fate of those countries ought to belong to the Soviet government.[39] Similarly, the Soviet Union wished to curb the enthusiasm of the British for the proposed federations. The formation of large blocks on its borders did not favour Soviet interests,[40] and in the planned federations the Soviet leaders saw only Western attempts at a resurrection of the old *cordon sanitaire*. It suited Soviet plans to keep the small states divided the Soviet leaders preferred to deal, at the right moments, separately with each state.

Partly to limit Western influence in East Central Europe and the Balkans, Stalin vigorously opposed the idea of a Balkan invasion by the Western powers. At the Teheran Conference in November 1943, he joined Roosevelt against Churchill to adopt operation "Overlord," the cross channel invasion of the continent, which limited Western operations to the Atlantic and French Mediterranean coasts. Thereafter, to divert German attentions from "Overlord," only the illusion of a Mediterranean operation remained.[41]

That decision greatly reduced the value of Hungary's offer to surrender. The Soviet Union was always cool to the idea of the negotiated surrender of Hungary. Nor was it in her interest to help the survival of a regime that had been her consistent foe. But if that regime chose to commit suicide, she had no objection. The Hungarian offer contained the possibility of some tactical advantage to the Soviet Union, but only if Hungary was willing to take immediate military action against Germany. In that case the Soviet Union was not opposed, since Germany was certain to occupy the country, which would have drawn away some of the German reserves,[42] and may have even eliminated the Hungarian conservatives. The British attitudes underwent some modification after the Teheran Conference. At the time of the Quebec Conference, while Churchill was still hoping for a Balkan invasion and a rapid advance through Italy, he was enthusiastic about the strategic significance of the Hungarian proposal and

strongly opposed to frittering away the opportunity for mere tactical advantage.[43] But after Teheran the issue became moot and even Churchill's enthusiasm waned. Not able to create the proper conditions that would have made a Hungarian surrender useful, nor willing to ask the Hungarian government to commit suicide and to expose the one million Jews and refugees to German reprisals, the British government limited itself to demands of symbolic acts of Hungarian resistance to Germany.

Juhász concludes his essay with the question "Was it possible for Hungary to break with Germany in the fall of 1943?"[44] The strategic situation at that time did not favour such a move. He points out that all of the states which switched sides were able to do so only when the front reached them. In 1943 both the Western powers and the Soviet Union were still far away from the Hungarian borders. But the domestic political pre-conditions were also absent in Hungary. The Kállay government's willingness to accept risks was conditional, the Hungarian leaders were willing to act only if their main objective, the saving of the regime, was assured. In all of the instances, however, when a country revolted against Germany and switched sides, the conservative or fascist regimes were also overthrown by the liberal and anti-fascist forces. At that cost the Hungarian leaders were not willing to accept the risks of German retaliation. Then too, the Hungarian liberal opposition, though it wished to break with Germany on moral grounds, was both too weak and unwilling to force the government to surrender or to overthrow it. Their reluctance was due to what Juhász calls the schizoid Hungarian political condition, where the pro-German elements were still in opposition and the liberals ended up supporting the government which allied with Germany. The anti-German groups recognized that an overthrow of the conservative government would most likely result only in the victory of the extreme right.[45] They had to recognize their impotence and did not pressure the government. Only the hope remained that the external events would force a fundamental political change in Hungary.

The Kállay government itself gradually recognized that the negotiations with the Western powers no longer had a realistic foundation and could not assure the survival of the regime. As a result, the government sank into inaction. By February 1944 Kállay had to admit that the future of the country would be determined less by the Western powers than by the Soviet Union

and, therefore, Hungary had no other choice than to establish contacts with that power.[46] The German occupation of the country on March 19, 1944, however, ended all hopes of a negotiated surrender. Undoubtedly the character of the Hungarian government, its real objectives in extending the peace feelers, and the political contradictions of Hungarian politics contributed to the failure of Hungarian policy in 1943. But we may pose a second question did the failure of Hungary to turn against Germany influence the treatment of the country at the peace conference and in general its postwar history? In the final analysis the specific war-time policies and actions of none of the East Central European states, save those of Yugoslavia, did materially alter their postwar treatment. Churchill's promise, made in September 1943, that the "satellite states, suborned or overawed, may perhaps, if they can help to shorten the war, be allowed to work their passage home," proved to be a hollow one.[47] The small states were at times treated with paternalism, at other times with arrogance and righteousness, always with an air of superiority, and never as equals. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the decisions over the political order that was to be imposed upon the region, or in the redrawing of its map, not the conduct or desires of the small nations, but the interests and the power alignment of the Great Powers proved to be decisive.

NOTES

1. Nicholas Kállay, Hungarian Premier, *A Personal Account of a Nation's Struggle in the Second World War* (New York, 1954). See also, Stephen D. Kertész, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool; Hungary between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia* (Notre Dame, 1953). Some of the best earlier accounts of the incident are found in C.A. Macartney, *A History of Hungary, 1929-1945* (New York, 1957), vol. II; and Mario D. Fenyő, *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary* (New Haven, 1972). Of the more recent works using the war-time British documents are Elisabeth Barker, *British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War* (New York, 1976) and György Ránki, *1944 március 19* (Budapest, 1978).
2. Juhász Gyula, ed., *Magyar-brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* (Budapest, 1978).
3. Malcolm Muggeridge, ed., *Ciano Diplomatic Papers* (London, 1948): 193.
4. Kertész, p. 34.
5. The Hungarians were not alone in that; at one point, British military experts expected a Russian collapse within ten days. Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters*, vol. II: *The War Years, 1939-1945* (New York, 1967): 175.
6. Eden to Halifax, 10.3.43 in Juhász, p. 102.
7. Kertész, pp. 70-73; also, Admiral Nicholas Horthy, *Memoirs* (London, 1956): 206-7.
8. Juhász, p. 83, fn. 2. Also pp. 104-6.
9. Memorandum by Aladár Szegedy-Maszák, June-July 1943, ibid., p. 195-6.
10. Summary notes on Hungary by W.D. Allen, 10.6.43, ibid., p. 158. Also, Szegedy-Maszák memorandum, ibid., p. 205.
11. Ránki, p. 77.
12. O. St.Clair O'Malley to A. Cadogan, 27.9.43, in Juhász, pp. 253-4.

13. O'Malley to K. Roberts, 17.3.43, ibid., pp. 109-10. Also, Memorandum by Károly Schrecker, April 1943, ibid., p. 129.
14. Ibid., p. 123.
15. Ibid., p. 133.
16. Szegedy-Maszák Memorandum, ibid., pp. 213-4.
17. Ibid., p. 214.
18. Note by F.K. Roberts, 12.2.43, ibid., p. 86. Also, A. Eden to Halifax, 10.3.43, ibid., pp. 101-2.
19. Barker, p. 63.
20. Juhász, p. 78, fn. 1.
21. Note by A. Cadogan, 11.2.43, ibid., pp. 86-7. Also, note by F.K. Roberts, 26.2.43, ibid., p. 98 and Eden to Halifax, ibid., pp. 101-2.
22. Ibid., p. 102.
23. Ibid., also, note by W.D. Allen, 25.7.43, ibid., p. 179 and summary note by F.K. Roberts, 22.9.43, ibid., p. 247.
24. Note by Allen, 25.7.43, ibid., p. 178.
25. Barker, p. 64.
26. Ibid., p. 65.
27. Notes by F.K. Roberts on "Hungary's Future," 27.9.43, in Juhász, p. 247.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 107.
30. Gyula Juhász, ed., *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához 1936-1945*, vol. IV: *Magyarország külpolitikája a II. világháború kitörésének időszakában, 1939-1940* (Budapest, 1962): 760. See also N.F. Dreisziger, "Count István Bethlen's Secret Plan for the Restoration of the Empire of Transylvania," *East European Quarterly*, 8 (January 1975), 4, pp. 413-23.
31. K. Schrecker's memorandum, in Juhász, pp. 130-1; notes by D. Allen, 27-31.5.43 and Szegedy-Maszák's memorandum, pp. 210-1. 32. D. Allen comments, 31.8.43, ibid., p. 217.
33. Schrecker's memorandum, ibid., p. 131.
34. Ránki et al., *Magyarország története*, vol. VIII (Budapest, 1976): 1047.
35. Juhász, p. 53.
36. Comment by A.R. Dew to Schrecker memorandum, 30.5.43, ibid., p. 137. Also, Notes by A.R. Dew, 28.7.43, ibid., p. 180.
37. Perhaps not to alarm the British, Molotov did not completely rule out some territorial changes in Transylvania. V. Molotov to A.C. Kerr, 7.6.43, ibid., pp. 158-9.
38. Comments by A.R. Dew, 30.5.43, ibid., pp. 137-8.
39. Notes by A.R. Dew, 28.7.43, ibid., p. 180.
40. Ibid. Also, V. Molotov to A.C. Kerr, 7.6.43, ibid., p. 159.
41. Barker, p. 210.
42. A. Eden to W.S. Churchill, 7.9.43, in Juhász, p. 233.
43. W.S. Churchill to A. Eden, 7.9.43, ibid., p. 232.
44. Ibid., p. 65.
45. Ibid., p. 69-70.
46. H.M. Threlfall to F.K. Roberts, 18.2.44, ibid., p. 307.
47. Barker, p. 208.

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Fighting Evil with Weapons of the Spirit: The Christian Churches in Wartime Hungary

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There would be hard to find in history a parallel to the wild swings of the political pendulum which occurred in Hungary in the wake of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I. Within less than a year, between October 31st 1918 and July 31st 1919 to be exact, the country passed from a conservative constitutional monarchy, through five months of a liberal, though increasingly left-leaning democratic republic, to one-hundred days of a Soviet type Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and then back again to right-wing authoritarianism in a nominal monarchy, without a monarch. The years following these times of troubles were dubbed the "Christian Course" since the Counter-Revolution being consolidated under Admiral Miklós Horthy's Regency claimed to have been inspired by Christian moral principles. While the regime's "Christianity" was questionable and manifest mostly in anti-Semitic demagoguery, the Christian Churches did, in fact, receive important political favours and material aid from the government, which considered them the most solid pillars of a stable social order.

The most important vehicle of Church influence in Hungary was, undoubtedly, its near-monopoly of public education. Not only were over two-thirds of the grammar-schools and teacher's colleges, as well as about half of the secondary schools, operated directly by the Churches, but they also provided religious instruction—a mandatory subject for all students up to the university level—in the "secular" state and communal schools. While it would be hard to measure the impact of school indoctrination and its residue in adult life, one would have to assume that such a massive and lengthy exposure—we are speaking of a quarter of a century, 1919-1944—did definitely contribute to the belief system and character formation of the population. Hence also the co-responsibility of the Churches for the ethical-moral standards and behaviour of Hungarians during

the times of trial which were to come. It is not enough to say that the clergy was of the people, that the Churches were part of the nation: their role was that of teachers of the nation and as such they cannot escape the judgment of history, be that praise or blame.

This essay will attempt to give an account, even if short and incomplete, of the little-known efforts of the Christian Churches in Hungary to counter the influence of Nazism, its anti-human and anti-Christian ideology. To the degree that the Christian population of Hungary, or at least part of it, responded to these promptings, resisted Nazism and helped the persecuted, one can say that all was not in vain: indeed, whenever the depressingly bleak picture of those times is illuminated by rays of humane behaviour, heroism and charity, we do find committed Christians in the first row among those fighting evil.

* * *

Having been rescued from the atheistic Communist dictatorship of Béla Kun, with their former privileges and wealth restored, the Churches were naturally thankful to Horthy and supported his regime with its loud protestations of patriotism and Christianity. They even participated — while there were, of course, exceptions — in the anti-Semitic hysteria, a gut reaction by the Christian majority to the Red Terror of 1919 which was headed by communists of Jewish origin. Leading churchmen advocated restrictive measures against the Jews who had a disproportionately large share of the economic wealth and were overrepresented in the most lucrative professions (such as medicine, law, journalism, theatre and the arts), and also among academics and university students. Although during the relatively prosperous years of the twenties the conservative Prime Minister, Count István Bethlen, succeeded in taming much of the right-radicalism and anti-Semitism of the first years of the Counter-Revolution, the Great Depression, which hit agricultural Hungary with devastating brutality, and then the rise of Hitler, once again upset the political equilibrium.

The triumph of National Socialism in Germany had fateful consequences for Hungary as well. On the one hand, the Third Reich, flaunting its power and its eagerness to use it, attracted into its orbit Hungarian foreign policy, which was determined by

revisionism and had up to this time leaned on Mussolini's Italy, while at the same time the ideas of National Socialism were undermining the Hungarian political and social order. All the factors and circumstances which made the victory of Nazism possible in Germany—the passionate nationalism born of bitterness over the lost war, the laying of blame for this defeat on left-wing socialism and on an international Jewish conspiracy, the unsolved social problems, extensive unemployment, the disillusionment with the existing order on the part of thousands of unemployed university graduates and their readiness for experiments that promised radical change—all these things were present in Hungary also. As a matter of fact, the radical right wing that had appeared in the counter-revolutionary movement of Szeged could claim priority in raising many points also contained in Hitler's program. There was quite a vogue in Hungary for castigating the feudalism of the aristocratic landowning class and the plutocratic rule of Jewish bankers years before the world press started paying attention to similar pronouncements by the Führer.

Thus when Hitler denounced the Treaty of Versailles and called for breaking asunder—by violence if necessary—the chains of the dictated peace treaties it was only natural that he should be enthusiastically applauded by Hungarians.

But even if we disregard patriotic fervour and other emotional factors, it is not at all surprising that the obvious and grave social ills besetting Hungary and the seeming indifference to them of the reactionary ruling class, which clung rigidly to its privileges, drove many into a camp of right-wing radicalism—all the more, since the communist experiment of Béla Kun had discredited for a long time to come the alternative of the radical left. [1]

In the beginning few people recognized Hitler's real intentions and the historic significance of his rule. Hungarian public opinion was not especially concerned about the fact that the new dictatorship abolished democratic freedoms in Germany. The Hungarian press, which was largely of a nationalistic and right-wing orientation, had long accustomed the Hungarian public to seeing mainly the defects of the democratic systems of Czechoslovakia or France and to sympathizing instead with the authoritarian governments, more akin to the Hungarian system, of such countries as Poland, Italy and Portugal and to admiring Pilsudski, Mussolini and Salazar. Later, during the Spanish Civil

War, this same press naturally took the side of General Franco who was fighting against the "Reds." In the beginning it seemed that the change in Germany belonged in this same category the number of effeminate, decadent, corrupt and almost anarchic democracies had again been reduced by one and the German people had also found its heroic leader, who would, on the basis of a nationalist and socialist view of the world, lead his nation into the better European future then emerging.

Recognition of the true face of Nazism was slow in coming, and even when it came it was confined to certain circles. The foreign policy of the Hungarian governments that followed one another tied Hungary ever more closely to Germany, until finally the two countries became wartime allies. As a result, official government pronouncements, as well as the press (which was under the direction of the government) remained friendly to Germany until the end, and attempted, in the interests of this friendship—and even more out of fear of this powerful ally—to gloss over the unpleasant features of Nazism. This is how it could happen that a good part of the Hungarian public was convinced up until the final defeat at the end of the war—and many remained convinced even thereafter—that Hitler was a statesman of genius and a man of high moral character, that National Socialism was unquestionably superior to other ideologies, that the German army was invincible, and—most incredible of all—that the Führer and those around him were pro-Hungarian. After the victorious conclusion of the war, or so they thought, Hitler meant to assign to Great Hungary, re-established with his help and treated as an equal partner, an important role in the New Europe.[2] That not everyone shared these delusions can be ascribed partly to the efforts of the Churches.

We must, of course, remark right at this point that just as the counterrevolutionary Horthy regime sympathized with the right-wing, authoritarian governments of Europe, the Hungarian Churches did not see much reason either to find fault with the fascism of friendly Italy. Benito Mussolini was not only a sincere friend of Hungary—and in this instance propaganda corresponded more or less to reality[3]—and not only was he the first to take up the cause of revision of Hungary's postwar frontiers, but it was he who by the Lateran Treaty had assured the sovereignty of the Pope over the Vatican state and had thus gained for himself undying credit in the eyes of Catholics all over the world.

In addition, many Christians, dreading communism, considered the vigorous and dynamic movement of fascism the most effective antidote to communism, rather than the old parliamentary systems that seemed tired and chaotic.

In replaying the happenings in Austria, the Catholic press was on the side of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg in their struggle against the godless "Reds," just as later it supported Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Sympathy among Catholics for the right-wing dictatorships was heightened in addition by the fact that Mussolini, Salazar, Dollfuss and Franco had established in the Catholic countries under their leadership the occupational corporations urged by the social teachings of the Popes and had based their new governmental systems on these corporations, rejecting the parliamentary system based on popular representation. Few people were aware, however, that this corporative constitution, supposedly superior to the parliamentary system of the Western democracies, served in practice merely to camouflage dictatorship. [4]

Hitler's rise met a very different reception from the Churches. It is true that he also began his rule with the conclusion of a Concordat with the Holy See. But he at once proceeded to break it: he took away the schools and other institutions of the Churches and propagated a neo-pagan ideology directly opposed to Christianity, and he put the entire machinery of the state, the schools, the press and the organization of the Hitler Jugend, which was designed to re-educate youth, into the service of this ideology. The Catholic world learned of the fate that awaited the Churches under the aegis of the Third Reich from the occasional cries of protest, still able at times to break to the surface, of the German faithful and from the protests of the Holy See, while the Protestants learned the grim truth from their German co-religionists, especially Karl Barth, who had gone into exile. [5] The Hungarian faithful could observe at close range the subversive activities of the Nazis in neighbouring and friendly Austria. The brutal murder of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss in 1934 aroused universal shock and indignation. The sorrow and sympathy of the Catholic public was heightened by the fact that the press extolled Dollfuss as the model of the truly and deeply religious statesman. [6]

The thrust of National Socialism toward territorial and ideological conquests did not, however, stop at the borders of the

German linguistic area. Its goal in Hungary was, on the one hand, to organize the German-speaking minority, the *Volksdeutsche*, and to make them into Nazis and into the "Fifth Column" of the Third Reich. And on the other, it attempted, by extending material and moral support to the Hungarian right-wing movements, to bring about the establishment of a Nazi-type regime in Hungary, which was, of course, to be in a subordinate and dependent relationship to the German *Herrenvolk* and its Führer.

The conservative Hungarian ruling class could naturally not watch these activities without attempting to intervene. Regent Horthy and his governments were reluctant, in spite of the ever tightening foreign political and economic connections with Germany, to endure interference in Hungary's internal affairs. Even in the face of grave pressures, the *Volksdeutsche* were not surrendered to the mercies of the Reich until the German military occupation of Hungary in the last year of the war. And the Germans were able to establish the Arrow Cross in power only after the forcible removal of Regent Horthy. [7]

Depending on the fluctuations of the domestic and external political balance, Horthy at times appointed definitely pro-German politicians, such as Gömbös and later Sztójay, to head the government, while at other times he chose definite Anglophiles, such as Teleki and Kállay. [8] Given the existing situation, of course, the hands of the latter were tied as well. In public they had to assume a pro-German right-wing position, but, as will be shown later in this paper, secretly they sabotaged the aims of the Germans, repressed the extreme right-wing movements, and urged the intellectual élite of the nation to opposition against Nazi ideas.

The Christian Churches also viewed with increasing concern the inroads right-wing radicalism was making into Hungarian public life. The harmonious relationship that had developed between the Church and the State during the 1920s cooled perceptibly as early as the premiership of Gömbös (1932-1937), an imitator of Mussolini and Hitler. [9] During the succeeding years, when anti-Nazi forces began to organize in the face of ever increasing German pressure and the rapid spread of native National Socialist movements, the Churches willingly offered their cooperation. This cooperation was evident in the support given to the ostentatiously anti-Nazi behaviour of the legitimist

aristocracy,[10] and in the close connections maintained with the liberal-conservatives, who were roughly the same individuals who wrote for the *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), a daily that had been started in 1938 with an expressly anti-Nazi orientation by the former Prime Minister Bethlen. It was manifested also in the fact that, while the Christians continued to be unwilling to come to terms with Marxist Social Democracy on the ideological plane, they nevertheless considered that the existence of the Social Democratic Party was in the given situation not only useful but even necessary. With the unfortunate Austrian example before their eyes, they did not urge the suppression of the Social Democratic Party but concluded instead an unspoken armistice with it for the duration of the common danger.[11]

We must point out as an important factor that National Socialism enjoyed in the case of Hungary a particularly great attraction in the fact that, in contrast to Marxist internationalism, it appeared in a national guise. In this way, while on the one hand it won the dissatisfied lower classes with its promise of social revolution, it gained ground among the middle class, and especially among the youth of the intelligentsia, with its loud anti-bolshevist, anti-Semitic and above all "deeply Hungarian" (*mélymagyar*) nationalistic slogans. As a result, even many outside observers could see only a quantitative difference between the National Socialist ideology and the "Szeged idea" sponsored by the ruling counterrevolutionary Horthy regime, and consequently they did not see the danger, or took it too lightly.[12] Resistance was further hindered by the fact that the Hungarian National Socialist movements differed in a very important respect from the German prototype. While the latter rejected Christianity and attempted instead to force on the German people a "German religion" concocted from ancient Germanic legends and from the "blood and race" myths of Alfred Rosenberg, the Hungarian extreme right—with insignificant exceptions—professed itself decidely "Christian." The various National Socialist parties in Hungary not only did not attack the Christian Churches in their programs, but promised positive protection for religion and Christian morality and assigned an important role to the Churches in the new order.[13] Ferenc Szálasi, who after 1938 was the leader of the Arrow Cross movement and from October 16, 1944 was for a few months head of state as "National Leader," remained a practising Catholic to

the end, and liked to imagine himself a crusader defending the Christian West against atheistic bolshevism. This show of Christianity had quite a confusing effect on the judgment of the faithful, and not infrequently even on that of priests and ministers. Their confusion was only increased when some bishops, priests, ministers and religious laymen raised their voices, in speech or in writing, against the unbridled anti-Semitic agitation carried on by the extreme right and branded it un-Christian. Was it not the Christian Churches who in the past had waged war most vigorously against the inroads of Jews in economic and intellectual life and against their deleterious influence on Christian morality? Had not such outstanding Christians as Bishop Prohászka the Jesuit priest and fiery orator Béla Bangha or the great leader of the Calvinists, Bishop László Ravasz, been anti-Semitic? But let us leave the Jewish question apart, since it requires a much more detailed discussion, and let us examine instead what concrete activities the Hungarian Churches undertook to counteract the challenge of the Nazi attack on the basic tenets of Christianity.

* * *

First we should mention the fact that, as their members came to realize the common danger, a movement toward unity was born within the Christian Churches. The goal of this movement was the defence of the common values of Christianity against the anti-Christian teachings of both bolshevism and Nazism. The idea of union was raised by the militant Jesuit Béla Bangha, who had the reputation of being an implacable opponent of Protestants, in the issue of February, 1937, of the prestigious *Magyar Szemle* (Hungarian Review), edited by Count István Bethlen and Gyula Szekfű. [14] His article, which created something of a sensation, was received favourably and enthusiastically by both sides. It was in this same year that the Franciscan Kelemen Király returned to Hungary. As the pastor of the Hungarian colony in Berlin since 1934, he had observed at close range the heroic struggle of the "Confessing Church" (Bekennende Kirche) of the German Lutherans against Nazism, and he had also witnessed the cooperation that had developed among the Christian Churches of Germany. It was under these influences that Father Király became the apostle of the unity movement.

He recounted his experiences in Germany and urged Christians to join forces against the Nazi danger in numerous lectures and speeches, as well as in his book published in 1942 and entitled *A keresztény egyházak egysége különös tekintettel a németországi protestantizmusra* (Unity of the Christian Churches with Special Reference to Protestantism in Germany), and in the monthly *Egység Útja* (The Road to Unity), which he started in 1942 with the approval of the Prince Primate. [15] It is true that neither the good will and readiness of both sides to cooperate, nor the discussions conducted in the press and in meetings for unity, nor yet the exchange of views carried on in the pages of the *Pester Lloyd* by the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz and Krizosztom Kelemen, Archabbot of Pannonhalma or their personal meeting which created a great sensation, led in the end to a *de facto* union, that is to an actual unification of the Christian Churches. But these attempts at achieving union did have some beneficial results. They put an end to the earlier fierce battles between the various denominations, and at the same time they made the clergy and the faithful aware of the danger threatening the Christian religion and of the need for cooperation and common action among the Churches in the face of this danger. [16] Only with these antecedents could it happen, for instance, that when at the end of 1938 German pressure forced the banning of the Catholic weekly *Korunk Szava* (Word of Our Age), which had courageously criticized Nazism, it was the *Protestáns Szemle* (Protestant Review) that came to its defense against the *Völkischer Beobachter* which had commented on the ban with malicious joy. [17]

The most significant event on the Catholic side in the struggle against Nazism was without doubt the issuing by Pope Pius XI in the spring of 1937 of the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*. In this document the Vicar of Christ, leaving aside all diplomatic affectations, used harsh words to condemn the persecution of religion in Germany as well as the teachings of Nazism as contrary to natural law and incompatible with the tenets of Christianity.

The Hungarian Catholic press expounded the encyclical in detail, [18] and the Actio Catholica summarized the teaching of the Pope in a pamphlet written in a popular style entitled *Nemzetiszínű pogányság* (Paganism in national colours). Of this leaflet, which contained the criticism and condemnation of

National Socialist ideology in the Pope's own words, 300,000 copies were published and distributed to a wide public by the Catholic rectories and by the various Catholic associations and organizations.[19] In the same year that the encyclical was issued there appeared a study contrasting Nazi racial theories with Christian teaching written by Kálmán Klemm (later Kálmán Nyéki), a professor of the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Budapest, and entitled *Kereszténység vagy faji vallás?* (Christianity or a religion of race?)[20] In 1939 a book entitled *Világnézeti válaszok* (Ideological Answers) by the immensely popular Father Bangha, whose Sunday sermons were regularly carried by the radio, achieved such unprecedented success that three new editions had to be printed during that same year. In this work, written in ordinary language, the learned Jesuit defended the tenets of the Catholic Church against teachings branded erroneous by the Church, such as Nazi ideas on race, the nation, the state, the individual and the community, religion and anti-Semitism.[21]

In the meantime both the Catholic and the Protestant press followed with close attention domestic and foreign political events and on occasion sharply criticized the activities of the German Nazis as well as of the Hungarian extreme right.

The banned Catholic weekly *Korunk Szava* (Word of Our Age) soon reappeared under the new name of *Jelenkor* (The Present Age) and, together with the *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), which was also edited in a strongly Catholic spirit, it continued to fight courageously against the spiritual poison of Nazism until its closure under the German occupation in the spring of 1944.

In providing the opportunity for a public confession of the Christian Catholic faith by hundreds of thousands, the celebrations in 1938 commemorating the nine-hundredth anniversary of the death of St. Stephen, first king of Hungary, and the XXXIV Eucharistic World Congress held at the same time in Budapest served to strengthen spiritual resistance to Nazism. The pride of Catholics was much increased by the great respect with which the Protestant Head of State Miklós Horthy received the papal legate Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) and extended hospitality to him in the Royal Palace. The Regent's Catholic wife took part with exemplary piety in all the religious celebrations, as did Prime Minister Béla Imrédy and the Catholic members of his government. At the same time it was

impossible not to notice that the invited guests from Germany, and from recently annexed Austria, were missing from among the ecclesiastical dignitaries and pilgrims who came in great numbers from every continent to be present at these magnificent festivities in Budapest. It was also painfully offensive that of all the European radio networks only the German (and Austrian) stations refused to transmit the closing speech of the papal legate, which because of heavy rain he delivered in the studios of the Hungarian radio. They did so in spite of the fact that Cardinal Pacelli spoke on this occasion in German. Or could this be precisely the explanation for their refusal?

The extreme right in Hungary was emboldened by the success of the *Anschluss* and started to throw its weight around ever more audaciously. To bring it under control Imrédy forbade soldiers and public employees to be members of any political party or to be active in party politics at all, and he had Ferenc Szálasi, who by this time was indisputably the most popular leader of the National Socialist movement in Hungary, imprisoned. However, the self-abasement of the Western democracies at Munich caused Imrédy to abandon his Anglophile and anti-German policies, and this change manifested itself in a strong shift to the right in his domestic policies as well. Because of this, Horthy forced Imrédy to resign in February, 1939, and chose as his successor Count Pál Teleki, who was an irreconcilable foe of Nazism. Teleki organized a secret resistance movement with threads extending over the entire country, which he called "intellectual defence of the nation."[22] The Churches were the mainstay of this "resistance." Their priests and ministers utilized the various institutions and movements under their direction to educate the youth and the broad masses of the people to adhere to the truly Christian and Hungarian view of the world, in accordance with the wishes of the Prime Minister. Nothing illustrates conditions at that time and the unreal quality of Hungary's independence better than the fact that the secretariat of this "intellectual defence of the nation," which had been established at the initiative of the Prime Minister, was under his personal direction, and had its offices in the building of the Prime Ministry, was forced nevertheless to operate under a cover name, and that its anti-Nazi pamphlets and regular newsletter had to be printed in a hidden printing shop and distributed secretly. It happened more than once, anomalous though it was, that the organs of the

Ministry of the Interior, mainly the county authorities, confiscated the "subversive" writings originating in the Prime Ministry and initiated criminal proceedings against those distributing them.

Following the tragic death of Count Pál Teleki, the "intellectual defence of the nation" sponsored by him ceased also and its secretariat was disbanded.[23] But there was greater need than ever for the dissemination of information and for intellectual resistance at this time, especially after Hungary had entered the war on the German side. Realizing this, Antal Ullein-Reviczky, a highly-placed official of the Foreign Ministry and later Ambassador to Stockholm, decided to organize a resistance group based on personal contacts and asked István Horthy, the Regent's son and later his Deputy Regent, to head this undertaking. Prominent among those invited to participate were Prince Primate Jusztinián Cardinal Serédi, the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz, the Lutheran Bishop Sándor Raffay, as well as the Provincial of the Franciscan Friars, an order that was popular among the lower classes. The task of the ecclesiastical leaders was primarily to instruct, through the lower clergy, the people and especially the youth in a Christian and Hungarian—and thus anti-Nazi—spirit. According to the testimony of Ullein-Reviczky, all the ecclesiastical leaders named above gladly accepted this task.[24]

Miklós Kállay, who during his tenure of two years (1942-1944) as Prime Minister worked to free the country from the fatal embrace of Germany and to lead it back from co-belligerency into neutrality, also speaks with the greatest appreciation of the resistance of the Churches against Nazism. He mentions the Catholic hierarchy among those who unceasingly urged him on to stronger resistance against the Germans.[25] And in speaking of the Upper House of Parliament he emphasizes that both the Catholic and the Protestant ecclesiastical leaders—among the latter especially the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz—opposed National Socialist and anti-Semitic agitation in a most courageous manner.[26]

* * *

During the war years repeated attempts were made by the extreme right to merge, in the name of national unity and

cooperation, the various social organizations of differing ideological leanings. In other words, they wished to induct, following the fascist and German examples, all university students into a single organization, all workers into another, all peasants into yet another, and so on. This would naturally have meant that all the religiously oriented mass organizations, such as the Hungarian Scouts Association, which cooperated closely with the Churches, would have been disbanded and right-wing ideology would have been granted a position of monopoly. These attempts, however, came to naught as a result of the resistance of the Churches. And when the Levente organization was established for the military training of youth, the Churches were able to gain the concession of being allowed to organize, along the lines of army chaplaincies, Levente chaplaincies also. They attempted to counteract through these chaplaincies the one-sided extreme right-wing influence that a considerable part of the Levente instructors and military training officers represented.[27]

In those areas of Hungary inhabited by a German-speaking population the Churches conducted a tenacious struggle for the survival of Hungarian feeling and of Christianity against the re-Germanizing and Nazi propaganda of the *Volksbund*. At pressure from the Third Reich, the authorities pushed the establishment of German-language schools even in communities where the majority of the parents had voted for Hungarian as the language of instruction. Where there was no suitable German-speaking teacher, one was imported from Germany—always a thoroughgoing Nazi. Prince Primate Serédi and the other ecclesiastical authorities resisted these efforts to the end, and in many cases they succeeded in saving the denominational and Hungarian character of schools in German communities.[28] The unbridled Pan-German and Nazi propaganda was effective primarily among the Germans living in compact settlements on the Dunántúl. Count Teleki requested József Pehm, pastor of Zalaegerszeg, to undertake the work of counteracting this. Father Pehm fought against Nazism in words and writing, especially by means of pamphlets printed in the press established by him.[29] In 1941, when worship of things German reached its zenith, József Pehm changed his German-sounding name to Mindszenty, a name by which he later became known all over the world. This name-Magyarization signified a courageous profession of loyalty at that time when Germans who had in the

past assumed Hungarian names were re-Germanizing their names *en masse*.

Finally we should mention one of the most significant literary products of the Catholic intellectual resistance, namely the *Katolikus írók új magyar kalauza* (The new Hungarian guide for Catholic writers), which appeared in 1941.[30] The title is an allusion to a work of Péter Cardinal Pázmány, the great defender of the Catholic faith during the Counter-Reformation. His *Az igazságra vezérlő kalauz* (Guide leading to truth) had provided guidance in the chaos prevailing in tenets of faith at the time of the Reformation. According to the preface of the editor, József Almásy, the authors of this latter-day work wished, in the same way as Pázmány, to act as guides, to show the Catholic faithful the road leading out of the ideological chaos of the modern age. In this massive volume the intellectual élite of Hungarian Catholicism, both priests and laymen, discussed in seventeen essays problems of the age which affected everyone and expounded the stand of the Church in relation to them. The subject matter was comprehensive and varied. Recognized authorities discussed the questions of "Literature and Catholicism" (Sándor Sík), "Modern Ecclesiastical Art in Hungary" (Antal Somogyi), "Church Music and the Modern Soul" (Alajos Werner), as well as "The Hungarian Catholic View of History" (Gyula Szekfű). Several essays were devoted to the relationship of the individual, society, and the Church for example, "The Spiritual Problems of Modern Man" (József Tiefenthaler), "Family and Education" (Mihály Marczell), "Our Youth and the Church" (Gedeon Péterffy), and "Christian Social Reform" (József Cavallier). The most important parts of the *Kalauz* are, however, those chapters in which the writers attempt, by expounding Divine revelation and Catholic philosophy, to differentiate the Catholic view of the world clearly from the erroneous views then in fashion and to point out the correct course of Catholic politics. Into this group belong the essays "The Lord has Spoken" (József Ijjas), "The Philosophy of Our Age" (Pál Kecskés), "The Ordering Role of Natural Law" (Sándor Horváth), "Man and the Realm of Truth" (Ferenc Erdey), "Religion and Race" (Kálmán Nyéki),[31] "Politics and Morality" (Ferenc Ibrányi), and "The Bases of Hungarian Catholic Politics" (József Almásy).

Among the above essays we should single out, as most

significant in extent and scholarly weight, Professor Sándor Horváth's seventy page discussion of natural law, in which this Dominican priest, who was known all over Europe,[32] combats the totalitarian state and its demands with the weapons of Thomistic philosophy. We should also make special mention of the essay by Ferenc Erdey, in which he criticizes the bible of Nazi racial theory, Alfred Rosenberg's notorious *Der Mythus des XX Jahrhunderts*. The article by Kálmán Nyéki examines the "Germanic religion," built on the worship of blood and race, which was propagated by Professor J.W. Hauer of the University of Tübingen and points out its incompatibility with Christian teaching. Noteworthy further is the article by József Almásy, in which he criticizes Hungarian Catholic politics but at the same time points out the path to a worthier future. Shortly after the appearance of the *Kalauz*, Almásy published a small volume[33] that attracted much attention in which he applied the yardstick of the Ten Commandments to Hungarian public life and found, beneath the varnish of "Christian Hungarian politics," very little of true Christian attitudes and actions. Almásy, in the footsteps of Old Testament prophets, did not merely castigate the violation of the Lord's commandments but exhorted his readers at the same time to a more faithful adherence to them in the future. In his book he presented the outlines of a Christian political course which, based on faith in God and love for man, would seek the good of society without sacrificing the dignity and freedom of the individual and would rest firmly on justice and truthfulness.

It can well be asked, of course, how many people read the writings enumerated above and others similar to them, and whether they had any effect. We cannot answer these questions. We have merely attempted here to show that the challenge of Nazism did not go unanswered: there was an intellectual resistance in Hungary, there were politicians, priests, writers, and scholars who, realizing their responsibility as educators of the nation, confronted the tide of brown paganism, which seemed to be sweeping everything before it, and took up the battle with pen and word against its propaganda warfare. Anyone who had ears to hear and eyes to read could not have remained ignorant of the Christian teaching that condemned Nazism.[34]

NOTES

1. For a history of the Hungarian National Socialist movements, as well as a penetrating analysis of their social roots, ideological content, and goals, see the essay about Hungary by István Deák in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right; A Historical Profile* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966): 364-407.

2. In reality, Hitler entertained a barely concealed antipathy toward Hungarians. This is proved by many documents, as well as by the unanimous testimony of those within the inner circle surrounding Hitler. See Stephen D. Kertész, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool; Hungary between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953): 38, 203.

3. See Nicholas Kállay, *Hungarian Premier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954): 175, 217.

4. Voices admonishing Catholics to caution *vis-a-vis* fascism, though rare, were not completely lacking. See, for example, the article entitled "Fasizmus és katolicizmus" (Fascism and Catholicism) in the Jesuit periodical *Magyar Kultúra,* 37 (1931): 5-10. The author of the article is identified only as an Italian university professor. The versatile worker for Hungarian Catholicism, Professor Béla Kovrig, stated as early as 1934 (in an article that appeared originally in the May issue of *Magyar Szemle,* XXI (1934)) that the state corporations set up by the Italian fascist regime do not correspond to the pertinent Catholic ideas, and he also expressed misgivings regarding the new Austrian constitution that had just been accepted. The author published this article once more in the volume entitled *Korfordulón* (At the threshold of a new age) (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1940): 164-80. This volume is an excellent illustration of Catholic political writing of the 1930s, since the articles and essays contained in it repeatedly accord enthusiastic praise to Mussolini, Salazar and the Spanish Right, but treat Hitler and National Socialism in a tone of caution and frequently of criticism.

It should be remarked that the other prominent Hungarian exponent of Catholic social teaching, Vid Mihelics, did not in the least share Kovrig's tolerant optimism toward Italian fascism and the other right-wing dictatorships. See Vid Mihelics, *Világproblémák és a katolicizmus* (World Problems and Catholicism) (Budapest: DOM kiadás, 1933): 136-51.

Austrian corporativism, which exercised a great attraction on Hungarian Catholics, was also criticized by some, and most sharply by József Almásy in his work *A tízparancsolat a közéletben* (The ten commandments of public life) (Budapest: Árkádia Könyvkiadó, 1942): 151-3.

5. Both of the Catholic and the Protestant press faithfully reported on the anti-Christian teachings and actions of the German National Socialists. Thus the column entitled "Külföldi krónika" (Events Abroad) of the *Katolikus Szemle* dealt during the 1930s primarily with events in Germany and with the persecution of Christians being carried out there.

Karl Barth, the anti-Nazi Protestant theologian of world renown, exercised a great influence on Hungarian Protestantism. During the 1930s his works were publicized and translated into Hungarian, and he himself was invited to make a lecture tour of Hungary, which he did in 1937. See István Kónya, *A magyar református egyház felső vezetésének politikai ideológiája a Horthy-korszakban*(The political ideology of the higher leadership of the Hungarian Calvinist Church during the Horthy Era) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967): 127-8; see also Gyula Gombos, *The Lean Years* (New York: The Kossuth Foundation, Inc., 1960): 33.

6. See, for example, the commemorative article about him entitled "Dollfuss vértanúsága" (The martyrdom of Dollfus) in *Katolikus Szemle,* XLVIII (1934): 580, as well as the lead-article "Dollfuss"by Count Iván Csekonics in *Magyar Kultura,* XXI (1934): 161-3.

7. On October 15, 1944, Horthy proclaimed Hungary's withdrawal from the war. Due to insufficient preparation and outright treason, the attempt failed. The next morning he was arrested by the SS and together with his wife, taken to Germany.

8. Imrédy began his tenure as Prime Minister as an Anglophile, and Bárdossy was "neutral"when he became Prime Minister. Only later did both turn increasingly toward

the Germans; this was precisely the reason that Horthy dismissed them. Considering the Regent's increasing antipathy toward Gömbös (who escaped forced resignation only because of his death) and further the dismissal of Darányi again because of his connections with the Germans and the Arrow Cross, as well as the fact that Horthy was forced by direct pressure from the Germans to appoint Sztójay and that he removed Sztójay as soon as this pressure decreased, we believe it can be stated with confidence that Horthy did not allow anyone to remain Prime Minister who entered into too close a relationship with the Germans or the Hungarian National Socialists.

9. This is shown on the Catholic side by the Christian Party's leaving the government. For the aversion toward Gömbös manifested by the leaders of the Calvinist Church, see Kónya, p. 73.

The following episode, which was related to the author by the late Baron Móric Kornfeld in the spring of 1965, illuminates the relationship of Gömbös and the Prince Primate.

Soon after he became Prime Minister, Gömbös called upon all public employees to take an oath of unconditional loyalty to him. Cardinal Serédi forbade the teaching staff of the Catholic schools to do this. Gömbös thereupon appeared in Esztergom, accompanied by Minister of Culture Bálint Hóman, in order to obtain an explanation of the Prince Primate's conduct. At their meeting, Cardinal Serédi explained—as he later recounted to Baron Kornfeld—that he did not know of any such thing as "unconditional obedience."Cardinal Serédi, who was a member of the Order of St. Benedict, said to Gömbös: "I am a member of a religious order, and thus I have bound myself by solemn vows to obedience to my superiors; but only *insofar as their commands do not conflict with the laws of God, of the Church, and of the Holy Order*. There does not exist on this earth the man or the authority that has the right to obligate someone to 'unconditional' obedience."It was obvious that the lecture did not exactly please Gömbös, but he did not press the matter further.

10. Thus at the mass meeting held in Körmend on October 10, 1937, which can be regarded as the first muster of troops of the anti-Nazi front that was gradually developing along the entire line from the conservative Right to the Social Democratic Left. See C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteen. A History of Modern Hungary, 1929/1945*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1956/1957), I: 183-4.

11. See the reply entitled "Szocialista békejobb" (Peace offer by the socialists) in *Katolikus Szemle* LI (1937): 693-5, to the article "Kereszténység és szocializmus" (Christianity and Socialism) by the Social Democratic writer Ferenc Fejtő in *Szép Szó* (August, 1937). The reply in *Katolikus Szemle* held that agreement on matters of principle between Catholicism and Marxist Social Democracy continued to be impossible, but it considered tactical, political cooperation between them permissible under certain circumstances, in the interest of common goals or against a common danger. See also József Almásy, "Magyar hivatásrendiség?" (Hungarian corporativism?) *Magyar Szemle*, XLVI (1944): 73.

12. József Almásy, in his series of articles entitled "A magyar katolicizmus útjáról" (About the road of Hungarian Catholicism) which appeared in the Catholic weekly *Jelenkor*, warned against the "optical illusion"which "sees only a difference in degree between traditional Hungarian nationalism and the new totalitarian nationalism."An account of this series of articles by Almásy, including the above quotation, is given in "A katolikus politika feladatai" (The tasks of Catholic politics) *Katolikus Szemle*, LIII (1939): 669.

13. In *Mit akarunk? a Nemzeti Szocialista Földmüves - és Munkáspárt programja* (What do we want? The program of the National Socialist Agrarian and Workers' Party), which appeared in May, 1933, Szálasi's precursor, Zoltán Meskó emphasized that his national socialist party "is based on the religious-moral view of the world and on positive Christianity.... It demands the severe persecution of anti-religious agitation and increased protection for the religious feelings of all Hungarian working people."The program, drawn up in 1934, of another National Socialist Party leader, Count Sándor Festetics, contained a similar point:

We demand that the Christian view of the world be allowed to assert itself in all areas of governmental and social life. We demand denominational peace among the Christian

denominations, as well as respect for the Churches and protection of their rights and prestige.

Finally Ferenc Szálasi, in his program statement published in 1934 and entitled *Cél és követelések* (Our goal and demands), which was adopted by the Hungarian National Socialist Party that was established in the fall of 1937 as a result of the union of the various right radical parties, stated that of the three pillars of the Hungarian Movement the first was the moral pillar, which requires that "true faith in God and true love of Christ may lead alone and exclusively to a true love of nation and fatherland, and conversely also: true love of nation and of fatherland should lead us to a recognition of the true Christ and the true God."In the same place he made the pronouncement that "Hungarian National Socialism is inseparable and indivisible from the teaching of Christ."Going even further, Szálasi in effect claimed for himself an exclusive right to Christianity when he declared that "the weapon for transposing into practice the Jewish moral world order is Communism, while the weapon for transposing into practice the moral world order of Christ is National Socialism."See József Közi-Horváth, "A magyarországi nemzetiszocialista pártok története, programja és jelenlegi állása" (The history, program and present status of the National Socialist Parties in Hungary) *Magyar Kultura*, 49 (1938), lst half year, pp. 48-52, 75-8, 116-7; quotations from pp. 49, 51, and 77. See also Deák's essay in Rogger and Weber, p. 394.

In spite of the above, the investigation conducted by the Vatican in 1938 found the Hungarian National Socialist (Hungarist) ideology to be irreconcilable with the teachings of Christianity. See Macartney, I, p. 228.

14. "Keresztény unió?" (Christian unity?) *Magyar Szemle*, XXIX (1937): 105-15. From the Protestant side János Victor replied with "Keresztyén unió?,"*Magyar Szemle*, XXX (1937): 5-15; to this reply came a further one from Béla Bangha with "Még egyszer: a keresztény unió," (Once more: Christian unity) *Magyar Szemle*, XXXI (1937): 297-308.

15. See Kelemen Király, *Katolikus-protestáns egységtörekvés története Magyarországon* (The history of the efforts to achieve Catholic-Protestant unity in Hungary) (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Standard Press, 1965).

16. Ibid., pp. 76-90; see also, Kónya, p. 92.

17. See "Klerikális tintakulik" (Clerical scribblers) in the editorial column, *Protestáns Szemle*, XLVIII (1939): 102-3.

18. See, for example, the account by József Közi-Horváth in *Katolikus Szemle*, LI (1937): 286-8.

19. Zoltán Nyisztor, *Az actio catholica tíz éve* (Ten years of the Catholic Action) (Budapest, 1943): 29. According to another source, the number of copies reached several million and it was still being distributed, amid the gravest dangers, at the time of the German occupation. J. Vecsey, ed., *Mindszenty Okmánytár* (Mindszenty documents), 3 vols. (Munich, 1957), III: 14.

20. Before the publication of Klemm's book, those persons who read only Hungarian could gain a knowledge of this question from the work, translated into Hungarian by Zoltán Nyisztor, of Michael von Faulhaber, the famous resistance worker and later Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, entitled *Zsidóság, kereszténység, germánság* (Jews, Christians, Germans) (Budapest, 1934).

21. See Béla Bangha, S.J., *Világnézeti válaszok; Korszerű vallási kérdések és ellenvetések [illegible] megvilágítása* (Ideological answers: illuminating contemporary religious problems and contradictions) (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Irodalmi Társaság, 1940), especially pp. 18-32, 79, 87, 101-3, 109-10.

22. See Macartney, I, p. 354; as well as Béla Kovrig, *Magyar társadalompolitika 1920-1945* (Hungarian social politics 1920-1945), mimeographed, 2 vols. (New York: Hungarian National Committee, 1954), II: 174-83.

23. Teleki took his own life on April 3, 1941 because he was not able to prevent the entry into Hungary of German troops marching against Yugoslavia and the consequent turning against Hungary of the Western democracies. By sacrificing his life, he wished to dramatize to the outside world the grave situation in which his country found itself. See Macartney, I, pp. 474-90. For the disbandment at Bárdossy's order of the secretariat of the "national political service"organized by Teleki, see ibid., II, p. 14.

24. See Antal Ullein-Reviczky, *Guerre Allemande Paix Russe*; *Le Drame Hongrois* (Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconniere, 1947): 124-5.

25. Kállay, p. 254.

26. Ibid., p. 267.

27. See Miklós Beresztóczy, "A magyar katolicizmus harca a nemzetiszocializmus ellen" (The struggle of the Hungarian Catholicism against National Socialism) in Antal Meszlényi, ed., *A magyar katolikus egyház és az emberi jogok védelme* (The Hungarian Catholic Church and the defence of human rights) (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1947): 12-13.

28. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

29. Sigismund Mihalovics, *Mindszenty, Ungarn, Europa: Ein Zeugenbericht* (Karlsruhe: Badenia Verlag, 1949), p. 65. Also, József Közi-Horváth, "Mindszenty im öffentlichen Leben, in Josef Vecsey, ed., *Kardinal Mindszenty* (München: Donau Verlag, 1962): 159-60.

30. Edited by József Almásy, and published by Ardói Irodalmi és Könyvkiadó Vállalat, Budapest in 1941.

31. This essay, expanded to more than 500 pages, also appeared as a book: Kálmán Nyéki, *Vallás és faj* (Religion and race) (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1941).

On the Protestant side, the Calvinist theology professor Béla Vasady argued against the Nazi theory of race. See Sándor Bíró et al., *A magyar református egyház története* (The history of the Hungarian Calvinist Church) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1949): 50ö.

32. Horváth, who taught for a number of years at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and later at the University of Graz, exercised a great influence on Catholic social teaching—primarily in Germany and Austria—especially through his conception of property rights, based on St. Thomas, which he expounded in his work entitled *Eigentumsrecht nach dem hl. Thomas von Aquin* (Graz, 1929).

33. See Note 4 above.

34. The participation of the Church in the anti-Nazi political resistance is treated in my article, "The Catholic Underground in Wartime Hungary: The Birth of the Christian Democratic Party,"*Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, XXIII, no. 1 (March, 1981): 56-69. The way in which it aided the persecuted and saved tens of thousands of lives is described in my paper, "The Role of the Christian Churches in the Rescue of the Budapest Jews,"presented to the Meeting of the Central and East European Studies Association of Canada in Montreal, June 4-5, 1980.

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Hungarian Intellectuals during World War II

Mario Fenyo

Attila József wrote in a poem about his Fatherland, a few years before World War II:

> Let man be more human
> and the Hungarian be more Hungarian
> so the country not become a German colony...

He did not live long enough to see his country subjugated by the Germans. Neither he, nor other Hungarian poets had the power to do anything about that subjugation.

The scope allotted to this paper is both too tight and too generous to explain why progressive thinkers and politicians in Hungary failed to maintain the country's neutrality and independence. Certainly too generous, if we must appraise resistance by the number of sabotage acts committed, occupation troops killed, or tanks disabled. There were a few acts of sabotage perpetrated by Hungarian patriots during the war, such as the bomb planted at the foot of the statue of Gyula Gömbös, the first prime minister with a clearly pro-Nazi foreign policy. All these actions, however, occurred towards the end of the war. As far as I have been able to ascertain, no Hungarian soldiers or gendarmes were killed for political reasons until the fall of 1944. The same applies to the members of the German occupation force stationed on the territory of Trianon Hungary.[1]

On the other hand, if we measure resistance by the number of victims, the numbers of those suffering or killed, or by the extent of pain, this article would require considerably more time and space. It is not easy to explain why Hungarian resistance deserves to be mentioned alongside movements in countries that have earned themselves a reputation for heroism. Conversely, how could there be victims of resistance, if there was no organized resistance? Equally paradoxically, why did Nazi Germany decide to invade and occupy a country which fought as its ally in the war, and was even regarded as a fellow Fascist nation, a member

of the anti-Comintern pact? It would take more than a paper to explain these paradoxes and anomalies.

Nevertheless, we can begin to make distinctions based on common sense. What sort of acts can be classified as resistance in the Hungarian context? Who may be included among those who resisted? Is it proper to dismiss the actions of Jews, or of Hungarians of Jewish descent, on the grounds that it was only natural for them to resist, as a matter of self-defense and survival?

For example, it is hardly possible to speak of organized Jewish resistance in Hungary. Jewish intellectuals were persecuted and struck down not simply because they were Jews, but because they were anti-Fascist. In fact, most of them tended to be "assimilated" rather than Jewish hence, when they acted politically they acted not only as anti-Fascist, but as Hungarian patriots, in what they conceived to be the best interest of the Hungarian nation.

Our biggest dilemma, however, concerns the period from 1941 to 1944, when Hungary fought as an ally of Germany, but was able to preserve a certain freedom of action. Against whom did the Hungarian patriots resist in this period? Was it against the Horthy regime, against the establishment? Against pressures from Nazi Germany? Or against the pro-Nazi and pro-German aspects of the policies of the Hungarian state?

It may be more appropriate to speak, not of a Horthy regime, but of a conservative establishment in which two conflicting tendencies struggled for supremacy. These tendencies were manifest in foreign rather than domestic affairs, a) to align the country's policies with those of Germany, either as a matter of sympathy and preference, or because it seemed unavoidable b) to resist German pressures, and curry favour with the Allies, preferably the Anglo-Americans. Hence, in the Hungarian context then, the term resistance may mean one of two things, resistance against the established conservative regime, regardless of whether it was pro-German or not; or resistance against the German pressures and the German orientation.

If we are talking about resistance against the established regime, several factors deserve to be mentioned. We should include the legal and usually loyal opposition the Social Democratic party, almost unique within the German sphere of influence the party of Rassay, the most prestigious leader of the liberal bourgeoisie [2] and the National Peasant Party, founded by

members of the March Front back in 1939.[3] There was also a true opposition, usually underground: the newspapers of the period continually report on individuals or groups arrested for illegal organizing, for dissemination of "Communist propaganda," or for membership in "cells." For instance, in Cluj (Kolozsvár) under Hungarian jurisdiction as a result of the Second Vienna Award, 664 persons were charged with "Communist activities" in the fall of 1943; they were "mostly Jews," specified the correspondent.[4] Unlike in neighbouring General government, or in Croatia and Serbia, only few of these "subversives" were hanged, but the judges seemed firmly convinced that the victims would be compelled to sit out their harsh prison terms to the bitter end. As in Germany, the public was hardly aware that the war was lost, even after Stalingrad and the rout of the Hungarian army at the Don River. It is only fair to add, however, that by 1942 agitators from the Arrow-Cross and other parties of the radical right were also officially persecuted.[5]

In most of Europe, the term resistance implied resistance against Nazi oppression. Thus we may plausibly argue that the first victim of this struggle in Hungary was Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki, who committed suicide as German troops were entering Hungarian territory in preparation for an attack on Yugoslavia. One of the later victims of this same struggle was Prime Minister Miklós Kállay, in charge from March of 1942 until the country's occupation by the Germans two years later; he was eventually deported to the concentration camp at Mauthausen. The Kállay regime had done nothing in an open or dramatic fashion against German interests, but its caution, designed to forestall a German invasion, proved futile. The stance of the regime was not cautious enough to delay the German invasion until the arrival of an Allied rescue force, nor was it clearcut enough by far to earn the country good points in the eyes of the Allies. Nevertheless, the Teleki government, and especially the Kállay government were covertly anti-Nazi and this attitude was understood by progressive and liberal intellectuals, even without tangible evidence. (It was also understood by the Germans who did have tangible evidence thanks to their efficient intelligence work and their awareness of secret Hungarian peace negotiations.)

This line of hesitant, often half-hearted official resistance did

not cease with the arrival of the German occupation forces. It surfaced again at the time of the Géza Lakatos cabinet in the summer of 1944. This time the Regent took a more determined stand as well and, as we know, the Hungarian government was able to halt the deportations and save the lives of close to 200,000 Jews, in spite of the presence of German troops.

What course of action was left open to the progressive intellectuals in the period 1941 to 1944? To be sure, they might have joined the underground Communist party. Few people did, however the Communist party in Hungary had no more than a handful of members, intellectual or otherwise. On the other hand, the progressive intellectuals could support the timid, wavering policies of the regime, encouraging it, perhaps, to follow a steadier, more decidedly anti-Nazi course. Indeed, many noteworthy intellectuals had decided to take precisely this line of action, or of inaction, and thus their resistance remained invisible, discounted by the historians. They had little impact, either in the short run or in the long run, much like the Kállay government itself.

There was, however, another alternative. Let us take a closer look at two particular groups of intellectuals who constitute something of an exception, who did have an impact. These two groups were the March Front of populist writers, and certain organizations of lower-class university students. My selection is not altogether arbitrary, for we know that writers, including poets, have often played a role of moral and political leadership in Eastern Europe, more so than anywhere else. Imre Kovács himself has gone so far as to claim that "Hungarian literature is perhaps the most political literature in the world." [6] University students were chosen as well not because they played a special function in Eastern Europe, but because so often they have been in the forefront of political agitation the world over.

Some of Hungary's most eminent young writers came together in a group that called itself the March Front, in homage to the spirit of March 1848. The cause that brought them together in 1937 was the neglect and exploitation of the Hungarian peasant and the misery of the country's villages. Politically, the Front had little impact, although their program was spelled out in "points," and included demands for individual freedom, universal suffrage, a minimum wage, a forty hour work-week, but most of all for the expropriation of the large estates. [7] Among the

members of the Front Imre Kovács, Péter Veres, Gyula Illyés. István Bibó and László Németh can be described as fellow-travellers of the Front. Each had produced novels, tracts and monographs revealing the plight of the peasant the best known, perhaps, being the autobiographical masterpiece of Illyés, *A puszták népe* (People of the puszta).[8]

Hungary's entry in the war did not elicit a united stand from these writers; several seemed impressed by the series of spectacular German successes. As Veres, one of the most prominent and progressive members of the Front stated, "the leaders of authoritarian and anti-Semitic movements in all countries were intellectuals." Only a minority of intellectuals had the courage, or even the inclination, to protest.[9] As progressive as he was, Veres himself attempted to make a distinction between "anti-Semite," a label he rejected, and *fajvédő* (rassen-schützlerich), one who defends his race, the latter a trait to which he ascribed a positive value.[10] The distinction strikes me as being rather subtle, not convincing.

The members of the Front, never a close-knit organization in any case, did not take a public stand against Hitlerism, whether in Germany or in Hungary; but several of them wrote of the "tradition" of Hungarian humanism, of the need to preserve the country's independence and its freedom of action. At the same time, they were unhesitatingly anti-regime, against the "semi-feudal system" which seemed to have survived in Hungary long after its demise elsewhere. It is not surprising that some of them were victimized alongside writers who were more explicitly socialist.[11] Thus Kovács was imprisoned in 1940 and charged with "lack of respect for the Hungarian nation, and agitation against the class of landowners."[12]

The organs of the Front were literary periodicals such as the *Magyar Csillag* (Hungarian Star), which was initiated in August or September 1941, under the editorship of Illyés and Aladár Schöpflin. This review was bold enough to publish poetry by Jews and crypto-Communists such as Miklós Radnóti, or by the worker-writer-artist Lajos Kassák, who had established his reputation as leader of the avant-garde during World War I. The periodical occasionally reviewed books published in Allied countries, including Joe Davies' *Mission to Moscow* and Wendell Willkie's *One World* rather favourably, in spite of both authors' sympathetic portrayal of the Soviet Union.[13]

The distinguished literary historian, Gyula Borbándi, wrote that the *Magyar Csillag* was a centre of spiritual resistance against Nazi ideas, and that only because of the caution and diplomatic ability of Illyés could the periodical continue to appear until the German troops marched in.[14] Borbándi used the term resistance somewhat loosely, however. It is not easy to tell, perusing the volumes of the journal, that a world war was being fought, a total war in which Hungarian soldiers and civilians were tragically involved. Unlike its predecessor, the more bourgeois *Nyugat* in the period of World War I, the *Magyar Csillag* did not challenge the censors, did not deplore the war openly, did not discuss Hungary's fateful predicament, and published no passionate pacifist poems like the ones Mihály Babits had had the boldness to write and recite (although those of Illyés came close).

As for daily newspapers, the *Népszava* (People's voice), the official organ of the Social Democratic party, continued to appear during the war. Apart from an outspoken issue published at Christmas 1941, which included articles by Communists and anti-Nazi intellectuals, its most progressive aspect was its ongoing polemics with members of the Arrow- Cross movement and the radical right-wing press. There was also the *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation) and the *Magyarország* (Hungary), which dared to praise democracy at a time when democracy was a bad word, and reported on the events of the war in such a way that it was possible to read the truth between the lines. For instance, the August 17, 1943 issue of *Magyarország* reported without commentary the ridiculously bloated figures supplied by German propaganda agencies: 43,642 Soviet aircraft downed since the beginning of the war, and a daily toll in Allied aircraft over Germany that often exceeded three hundred. On the other hand, I have pored through the daily papers in vain in search of direct or indirect evidence of sabotage or of active resistance.

The March Front, and other progessive writers, often collaborated with groups of university students, especially those with a peasant background, in evoking the heroic past and in honouring the heroes of the Hungarian revolution of 1848-49. Some of them organized the Historical Memorial Committee, which is considered by some historians as a Communist "front," by others as a front for the resistance in general.[15] The specific task of the Committee was to lay wreaths at the monuments

dedicated to Lajos Batthyány, to Lajos Kossuth, to Mihály Táncsics. The gesture could not be misinterpreted, all were leaders of the movement of independence from the Austro-Germans in the 1840s, whereas Táncsics was also the most eminent representative of the left or even socialist wing of that revolutionary period.[16] Similar demonstrations took place on March 15 of each year by the statue of the poet Petőfi. Moreover, if we discuss the resistance of intellectuals, or of the political function of literature, then surely Petőfi deserves mention, even though the poet has been dead for almost a century.

During the war some university students participated in the so-called "People's Colleges" or NEKOSZ. At the outset, it is true, these colleges were not political associations, but merely dormitories specially funded to house impoverished indigent students, particularly those of a peasant background. The residents of the first and most prominent of these, the István Győrffy College in Budapest, soon recognized the need for political involvement. The tenor of the involvement was provided by a cell of Communist students instrumental in organizing conferences dealing with Marxism, socialism and related themes, at a time these were proscribed all over the country. The students at this College were present at or leading the anti-Nazi demonstrations. Many of them attended the writers' conference at Szárszó in August 1943, where resistance against Nazi domination was explicitly discussed by László Németh and others.[17] The College dissolved itself, under official pressure, on April 22, 1944, shortly after the arrival of the German occupation force.[18]

It is not helpful to compare resistance in Hungary to French, Belgian, Yugoslav, Polish, Slovak, or any other kind of resistance. Nor is it helpful to claim, as a number of Hungarian authors have done, that Hungary was a Fascist country by predilection, or that practically all Hungarians had accepted, passively or actively, German tutelage throughout the war.[19] It must be conceded, however, that resistance was almost always passive, seldom armed. This was particularly true of the intellectuals who tend to be a timid lot in any case. This was also true of the churches, of course, although religious organizations and individual clergymen directly or indirectly intervened to save the lives of many thousands of Jews, jeopardizing their own in the

process.[20] The one pistol shot fired by the opposition member of parliament Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, when a Gestapo unit banged on his door on March 20, 1944, was the lone heroic gesture of the day. Arrested, but released by the Horthy regime, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and others had the opportunity to organize a resistance group, but the group was wiped out, and its leaders executed, before it could cause damage. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was not a writer but he had regularly met with, and enjoyed the support of many Hungarian intellectuals.[21]

What may be more pertinent would be to explain and understand why resistance in Hungary assumed such a passive form. I have discussed one of the reasons: resistance to Nazi pressures was carried out, in however lukewarm a fashion, by the regime itself. Acts of physical violence against the Germans could have frustrated the government's efforts to resist Nazi pressures. Another factor, however, needs to be emphasized: the impact of a constant bombardment of anti-Semitic and anti-democratic propaganda over the years. It is debatable that Hungary was a dictatorship, let alone a totalitarian regime or a Fascist country between 1920 and 1944; but the anti-Semitic propaganda directed at the working-class and the petty bourgeoisie remained unchecked for twenty years.

At the same time, the Hungarian public was wounded in its nationalist sentiments by the punitive peace treaty of Trianon. The "average" Hungarian fell for Hitler and for Nazi Germany for the same reasons as the "average" German, a) because Hitler catered to the petty bourgeois mentality that felt its livelihood threatened by the presence of a sizeable Jewish minority, b) because Hitler presented the prospect of the recovery of lost territories, the revision of the treaties signed at Versailles in 1919 and 1920. Indeed, Hungary did increase temporarily as a result of Hitler's intercession and Hungarian nationalists would have required unusual acumen and self-denial not to feel gratitude, not to accept the gift they felt they deserved. Any act against Hitler or against his policies must have seemed an act of ingratitude. The resisters, those who denounced German pressure or Nazi Germany itself, could be seen as ungrateful, at best. Unlike the Yugoslav partisan, or the fighter in the French maquis, those who resisted in Hungary had to brave public opinion in their own country.

NOTES

1. Ferenc Mucs, "Quelques aspects de la Résistance armée en Hongrie contre le Fascisme," in *European Resistance Movements 1939-1945* (Macmillan, 1964), vol. 2, 155-69.

2. L. Nagy Zsuzsa, "A liberális polgári ellenzék pártjai és szervezetei (1919-1941)" ("The parties and organs of the liberal bourgeois opposition"), *Történelmi Szemle* (1976), no. 3, 335-60.

3. Imre Kovács, *A márciusi front* (The March Front) (New Brunswick, 1980), 64.

4. *Magyarország*, 20 October 1943.

5. The Arrow-Cross movement had peaked by 1942, and its advocates seemed to be carrying out rearguard action. In any case, the movement was clearly anti-establishment and its acts often had, explicitly or implicitly, an edge of social protest.

6. Kovács, *op. cit.*, 15.

7. S.B. Várdy, "The World of Hungarian Populism" (review article), *The Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies*, vol. V, no. 1 (Spring 1978), 41-50.

8. István Bibó, *Harmadik út* (Third Way) (London: Magyar Könyves Céh, 1960), 186. The masterpiece by Illyés is available in English translation under the title *People of the Puszta* (Budapest: Corvina, 1967).

9. "Egyenes beszéddel" ("In plain words"), *Magyar Csillag*, vol. III, no. 23 (December 1943), 653.

10. "Az író politikája" ("The politics of the writer"), *Magyar Csillag*, vol. IV, no. 1 (January 1944), 8.

11. *Wir Kampften Treu für die Revolution* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 462. Among the more explicitly socialist writers one might mention Zoltán Fábry in Tiso's Slovakia, and György Bálint in Budapest.

12. Kovács, *op. cit.*, 83-84.

13. Both review by Imre Csécsy, vol. III, no. 22 (November 1943), 620-4; and vol. III, no. 24 (December 1943), 742-6.

14. *Der ungarische Populismus* (Mainz: Hase and Koehler Verlag, 1976), 201.

15. A Communist front according to István Pintér, "Le role joué par les Communistes...," in *European Resistance Movements*, 170-90; a front for the resistance movement in general according to Borbándi, *op cit.*, 231.

16. *Sej, a mi lobogónkat fényes szelek fújják* (Bright winds blow our banner) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977); also *Népszava*, 11 November 1941.

17. See, for instance, Sándor Csoóri, "A magyar apokalipszis," *Tiszatáj*, vol. 24, no. 10 (October 1980), 28.

18. *Sej, a mi lobogónkat...*, 104-5.

19. See, for instance, Zoltán Horváth, *Hogy vizsgázott a magyarság* (Budapest: Népszava, 1947), 2. The historian Gyula Szekfű, likewise deplores the lack of resistance, and ascribes it to a love of comfort and safety in *Forradalom után* (After the revolution) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1947).

20. For a detailed and thoughtful discussion of the attitude of the churches in Hungary see László T. László, *Szellemi honvédelem* (Spiritual defense) (Rome: Katolikus Szemle, 1980), as well as Professor László's writings in this volume.

21. Borbándi, *op. cit.*, 229.

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The Peace Seekers: The Hungarian Student Movement for National Independence in 1944

Recollections by
Janos Horvath

On December 14, 1944, I was arrested by the *Nemzeti Számonkérő Szék* (Court of National Reckoning), an Arrow-Cross detachment of the Hungarian military police operating in collaboration with the Gestapo.* They wanted to liquidate the *Szabad Élet* (Free Life) student movement, a network of resistance activists that served as a focal point of a broader alliance, the Hungarian Youths' Freedom Front. My captors employed an assortment of tortures in pursuit of their goals. They possessed fragmentary knowledge about our movement and sought details regarding specific activities and organizational arrangements, such as (1) the production and dissemination of leaflets, pamphlets, manifestoes, newsletters, posters, (2) our underground bureau issuing false identification documents, (3) the sabotage project, (4) coordination with the Hungarian Youths' Freedom Front, (5) contacts with the political and military leaders of the Hungarian Independence Movement, (6) contacts and collaboration with communists, (7) contacts with Jewish organizations, (8) international contacts.

Driven by passionate vengeance, the Court of National Reckoning proceeded to court-martial our group of twelve young

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*Editor's note: The literal translation of this term is Chair (Bench) of National Reckoning (or Retribution). One North American author describes this "blood court of the Arrow Cross party" as a reorganized unit of the "field gendarmerie." See Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford, California Hoover Institution Press, 1970), pp. 235f.

men and promulgated several death sentences. We were saved only by the unexpected advance of the Soviet Army to the immediate neighbourhood of the Margit Boulevard Military Prison on Christmas night. During the subsequent confusion we were transported numerous times, to be held in turn by the German Gestapo, Hungarian jail-guards and Arrow-Cross brigades. While being passed from one stage to another on January 17, 1945, I found a miraculous escape at a schoolbuilding's basement water tap by stumbling into Gyula Gombos and was led by him to the hiding place of Zoltán Tildy, Albert Bereczky, Viktor Csornoky and their families.

My brief compendium of events that unfold here will touch upon episodes remaining thus far only fragmentarily recorded by participants and historians alike. I hope that my present writing may turn out to be an encouragement to others to describe their own role and experience.

The Underground Student Resistance

On March 19, 1944 the German military occupation of Hungary brought to a grinding halt the government's effort to scale down and abandon participation in the war. In spite of the imposition of a pro-Hitler regime, the nation's desire for peace and reforms could not be halted. The occupying power forced the Hungarian Independence Movement underground.

I gradually found myself involved with underground activities. What might count as a first step was that I did continue meetings with others to plan for peace and reforms even after the banning of organizations and the arrest of leaders. The substance of our discussions was how to bring about peace and how to prepare for the building of a new Hungary. We envisioned reforms for a just, enlightened and prosperous country. We wanted a parliamentary democracy to stimulate self-determination and decentralized decision-making in all political, economic, social and cultural matters. The populist literature of the immediate past decade was our much cherished food for thought.

The inherent dynamics of an underground movement carried us toward activism. When the freedom of speech and assembly are banned, the written word is the next available method of sharing one's thoughts. But the writing down of things in defiance of prohibition tends to generate symbolic attributes.

The idea receives more careful clarification and expressions become more polished, as if subconsciously suspecting that a particular piece of writing might turn out to be the last composition in the author's life. The pressure is intensified by the awareness that the illegal text, if discovered by the authorities, will incriminate not only the writer, but also the reproducer, the reader, the transmitter and, not infrequently, even some totally uninvolved individuals.

Our initial writings drew heavily on quotations from poems and excerpts from prose. The selections were arranged so as to accentuate the country's predicament. Poet Endre Ady was quoted most frequently while excerpts were also drawn from a broad assortment of writers, philosophers, scholars, scientists, artists and statesmen. In due course the quotations and excerpts shrank while the commentaries grew in length to expand into full-blown articles. With the passage of time, we recognized the need for disseminating news so that information could be spread regarding vital issues. The main themes were (1) the unconstitutionality of the German-imposed regime and the arrest of Members of Parliament and other national leaders, (2) the inhuman treatment of the Jews and efforts to sabotage Eichmann's schemes, (3) data on the Allied Powers' superiority and the inevitability of German defeat, (4) Hitler's design to sacrifice Hungary in rear-guard fighting, (5) the Atlantic Charter and other pronouncements of the Allied Powers to guarantee Hungary's independence after the war, (6) the brutality of German occupation forces in Poland, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, (7) the ever-widening Hungarian resistance and the sabotaging of efforts, (8) glimpses into the future era of peace and reconstruction.

While engaged in creating this information, we came to recognize that our efforts became true underground operations. Such quantitative growth and qualitative refinement could have resulted only from the peerless leadership of Sándor Kiss, a Professor of Philosophy at the Teachers' Academy. Indeed, the history of 1944 Hungary remains incomplete until taking into account Kiss' role. At the year's beginning the unity council of all democratic student assemblies had claimed him as their leader. By the summer's end he was drafted to preside over the evolving alliance of national youth organizations student, worker, peasant and church-affiliated associations. By November he was

co-opted an insider of the underground national political leadership.

I had known Sándor Kiss since 1941. We became friends after 1943 when he came to a workshop meeting of the *Kaláka Szolgálat* (Kaláka Service) held at the premises of the Pozsonyi Street Reformed Church in Budapest. I was a co-organizer of the event jointly with István B. Rácz and Lajos Imre. The main theme of the symposium was a fashionable topic: Hungary's gloomy future between the grindstones of German and Russian empires. The tone of the meeting resounded cherished chords in the mind and heart of Sándor Kiss. He was moved by the participants' objectivity and humility. This was unusual considering the status of several participants, including Albert Bereczky, and Klára Zsindely Tüdős. Bereczky, a Reformed Church minister, was highly respected in the society. He was an effective intermediary between the political establishment and the left-wing opposition, and also a behind-the-scenes adviser to Regent Miklós Horthy. Klára Zsindely Tüdős, with her cabinet-minister husband, was perceived as one of the guardians of Pál Teleki's political heritage. She was a charming socialite, a patron of the leftist Győrffy College and a prosperous fashion designer. Sándor Kiss felt comfortable with this group and was readily accepted as a full partner. He was impressed enough to accept our invitation to join Kaláka Service's Executive Committee, which thereafter consisted of Lajos Imre, Sándor Kiss, István B. Rácz, Rezső Szij and myself.

In the course of the forthcoming year Sándor Kiss viewed his role truly seriously at Kaláka and participated in all its activities, including frequent membership meetings and special projects which all coalesced into various blends of Bible reading, poetry recital, folksong practice, theatre goings and weekend hiking. A popular and well-endowed Kaláka project was the sending of books into Hungarian villages expected to become again part of Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia after the war's end. Beyond its declared merit, this project served as a cover of legitimacy during the subsequent underground activities.

My own involvement in the student independence movement consisted of the operation of the centre responsible for the print shop, documents and liaisons. As I held a full-time job with managerial responsibilities, I was able to secure the facilities, equipment and resources essential for the operation. Because my

workplace became the main centre of the student underground activities, it is important to describe some of the pertinent arrangements.

Back in 1940 when I initially enrolled as a student in the Faculty of Economics of the József Nádor Polytechnic and Economics University, Budapest, I also took a job with the Futura National Marketing Centre. I was assigned to work in the accounting department of a major subsidiary, the Nostra National Warehouse Corporation with headquarters in Budapest and about 45 plants across the country. Within a few years I was advanced to the position of Deputy Chief Accountant an unusual career for a young man which could be explained by innovative adaptation of the latest accounting techniques just evolving in the university seminar to problems of a fast-growing business. Consequently, in 1944 I was in charge of a sizeable operation with control over substantial resources as well as freedom of movement across the country.

In April 1944 when the Allied Powers inflicted heavy bombing damage on Budapest, my department was evacuated to the village of Abony, on the Budapest-Szolnok road. Within weeks there evolved an auxiliary of the underground Free Life Student Movement with István B. Rácz and myself in residence, Sándor Kiss and Lajos Imre frequent guests for days. The Kaláka Service also branched out to Abony where we established friendly contact with Rezső Sedhy-Lengyel, a chaplain at the Roman Catholic parish. It was here that my two co-workers at the office, Erzsébet Beke, accountant, and Margit Holló, secretary, became deeply involved with Kaláka and subsequently with the underground print shop. My offices in Abony and Budapest had daily contact by a courier automobile in which we easily travelled and transported underground material. By the second half of the summer I kept reproducing a variety of manifestoes and leaflets as manuscripts reached me from Kiss, Rácz and others. In the meanwhile the dangers of underground activities became increasingly real. Arrests, interrogations and surveillance compelled caution. A group of students, including some Free Life activists, were seized at the Hársfa Street Student Home. Vilmos Fitos was arrested by the Gestapo. László Vatai was held by the Gestapo for weeks. Although each of these persons was released, we could no longer ignore the chilling fact that the intelligence agencies were working hard to discover us.

Perils did mandate caution, yet the very dynamics of the underground resistance movement prompted us to seek to mobilize additional persons and to seek to enhance effectiveness through collaboration with like-minded groups. These were the motivations that caused me to travel to Kecskemét around mid-August where I was introduced to and, quite unexpectedly, initiated into the Magyar Közösség (Hungarian Community). The message arrived through András Hamza, a trusted friend, a relative, as well as partner in the underground, inviting me to come for a weekend jointly with Sedhy-Lengyel. In Kecskemét, the two of us were received by Barnabás Kiss, law professor, Bálint Kovács, pastor of the Reformed Church, and András Hamza. The five of us discussed at length the miseries of German occupation, the cruel deportation of the Jews, the gloomy prospects of the peace treaty with Hungary after the war, and the compelling necessity of severing ties with Germany as well as re-establishing good relations with the Allied Powers.

All of us recognized that at this particular time of national emergency, immediate organizing for action was imperative. At this point our host confided that they already belonged to an association, named the Hungarian Community, through which individuals reinforced their struggle for independent Hungary. In the spirit of Endre Ady, Dezső Szabó, László Németh and other populist writers, the association's operational method was to lobby for the filling of decision-making positions with individuals whose past record revealed no loyalty risk. We were invited to join. Thus our student independent movement gained new allies who could be mobilized. (I had not even the faintest notion that two-and-a-half years later this event could be twisted around by Rákosi's secret police to suspend my parliamentary immunity, to forge the charge of my conspiring against the democratic system of government and to keep me in prison for four years.)

The summer's end in 1944 saw renewed initiatives by the Horthy regime to ease Hungary out of the Axis orbit. We were informed about these efforts through Albert Bereczky, Miklós Mester and Klára Zsindely Tüdős. In the student underground publication we chose themes that dealt with national survival and the lone Magyar island in the German and Slavic ocean. The tragic outcome of October 15 proved the darkest of the gloomy prophesies. The old political establishment failed its last

comprehensive test. The coup failed to force out Hitler's war machine partly because some Hungarian military command posts were infiltrated with persons whose German background and loyalties prevailed over their Hungarian citizenship. At this crucial point they betrayed their Supreme Commander Horthy and denounced their fellow officers. Hitler succeeded in establishing Szálasi as the *Führer* of Hungary.

For the student underground movement the October 15 tragedy signalled the compelling necessity to mobilize everything and to accept greater risks. Kiss' leadership was characterized by dedication, talent, innovativeness and coordination. Henceforth, he spent substantial time in the operation centre attached to my office at the Nostra corporation headquarters near Vörösmarthy Square. Adhering to underground operational rules, to my superior and colleagues he was introduced under the name of Pál Juhász, adjunct professor from the University of Kolozsvár, with whom I was supposedly writing an accounting manual for agricultural cooperatives. I assigned to him a desk with telephone, access to a conference room and a key to the basement pretending that he drew case-study materials out of the old files stored there. It was in this basement that I established the print shop of the Free Life Student Movement. We worked with two automatic stencil duplicators, three vintage mimeographs and several typewriters. We had practically unlimited supply of stencil, paper and copying ink. The supplies had been accumulated to hedge against wartime shortages. These facilities produced between 200,000-300,000 sheets of underground material.

The prime printed product was the periodical, *Szabad Élet* (Free Life), which had under its title a caption "Journal of the Free Life Student Movement." It was published about eight times. The issues consisted of varying lengths, from five to ten pages. These issues were produced in 1,000 to 3,000 copies. The content included editorials, news, essays, documents, poems, letters, etc. The editor was László Vatai and subsequently István B. Rácz. The list of contributors included Sándor Kiss, Emil Majsay, Pál Jónás, Vilmos Fitos, András Hamza, Lajos Imre and others. One recurring feature of the publications was poetry, mostly from Ady. Co-editor István B. Rácz stood always ready to insert a befitting line, or a stanza, or a whole poem. A sample may suffice to show the thrust of the message

Presently it is the orgy of the inferior epigons,
But we ready the stones and tools,
Because we shall bring forth the grand design,
To build the magnificent, and beautiful, and human, and Magyar.
If fate demands we shall die,
But it remains our blessed reward,
That after the cataclysm honorable men will rest under the ruins....
Then after the hiatus, others may reassert life to continue....
Presently during the blind night of shamelessness,
Every noble outcast must guard jealously his honor....

The editorial policy and production techniques of the periodical applied to the other publications, namely leaflets, posters and manifestoes. Some were excerpted from *Free Life* most were original manuscripts, which then were reproduced in numbers of a few hundred to several thousands, and this latter group of writings were targeted at specific places, groups and occasions. In general, all publications communicated the message that the puppet Szálasi regime was illegal and that the Hungarian people wanted peace immediately. A recollection of some of the topics appears appropriate here.

(1) Reports were written about the events leading to Horthy's Proclamation which called for the preservation of national integrity, the announcement of armistice negotiations with the Soviet Union, the order to military commanders to establish contacts with the Red Army commanders so as to hasten German withdrawals.

(2) Descriptions of the arrest of Horthy in the Buda Castle and his appointed deputy, General Lajos Dálnoki Veress, at the Trans-Tisza headquarters, by German SS commandoes.

(3) Reports that in September Horthy had already sent to Moscow a distinguished delegation consisting of Géza Teleki, Domonkos Szent-Iványi and Gábor Faraghó.

(4) We urged nationwide protest of the atrocities against Jews on the grounds of humanity, Christian ethics and Hungarian chivalry.

(5) Eyewitness reports from the Warsaw uprising and its bloody oppression upon Hitler's special instruction.

(6) News of Arrow-Cross officials slaughtering Hungarian soldiers

and civilians attempting to return to their homes in Transylvania.
(7) News of the torture and execution of three military officers of the Hungarian Independence Movement: János Kiss, Jenő Nagy and Vilmos Tarcsay. (The Movement's political head, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, was executed after another month.)
(8) A call for peace entitled *Igaz szó igaz magyarokhoz* (True word to true Hungarians) based on a joint-statement by István Vásáry, Mayor of Debrecen, Imre Révész, Bishop of the Trans-Tisza Reformed Church, and István Balogh, the Roman Catholic priest of Szeged-Alsóváros.
(9) Appeals to resist orders for the evacuation of people and national wealth to Germany.

The distribution of all student resistance publications produced in the Nostra basement were arranged by Kiss. Occasionally, I could hear him saying into the telephone "Here is Pál Juhász speaking.... Have you shipped away the potatoes? There is another consignment for transit...." Also, we sent copies by mail to a variety of addresses using postage-free envelopes of governmental bureaux and military authorities. Furthermore, each of us yielded to the temptation to hide copies at places where they would be discovered by certain persons.

Even a cursory inventory of underground resistance material produced at the Nostra premises would remain incomplete without accounting for work done for at least four other groups. Here follows a sketchy description. First, the *Magyar Ifjuság* (Hungarian Youth), a periodical published by the Freedom Front of Hungarian Youth, a broad coalition from communists on the left to senior scouts on the conservative wing, held together by Kiss. Under his direction we typed and duplicated three issues in about 1,000-2,000 copies of each. Second, the periodical *Eb Ura Fakó* edited by middle-of-the-road intellectuals in the spirit of Pál Teleki. Its stencilled copies were taken away from the print shop by István Csicsery-Rónay who always appeared in the elegant uniform of an artillery lieutenant. Third, the *Occasional Papers* of a group of policy analysts, namely Baron Ede Aczél, József Dudás, Miklós Csomós and Ernő Péter. I recall the duplication of four pieces one lengthy (around 20 pages) position paper in 100 copies and three shorter (one-two pages) leaflets. A fourth group of clients represented by Esther Valkay and two lieutenants received bundles of published material from me four or five times.

The print shop's efficient and secure operation can be attributed to the fortunate physical facilities and a faultlessly working team. The former attribute has been mentioned earlier. The latter should be acknowledged at this point. I had felt that the particular combination of efficiency and security criteria required a technically competent and well-disciplined small workforce whose members were each capable of maintaining the equipment as well as spending long blocks of time on the job. Actually, the team consisted of four persons: István B. Rácz, Sándor Kiss, Lajos Imre and myself. Each of us was able to stay in the print shop at any hour of the day or night. I was home at Nostra here, my full-time job encompassed a broad range of managerial responsibilities that took me to places in which my absence from the desk should not catch attention. Besides, my secretary and my associate accountant were sufficiently aware of my off-desk involvements to hold a facade in case of need. Sándor Kiss was known as the workaholic research professor now tangled up in locating case studies in the archives. His coming and going at odd hours was substantiated. Rácz was employed by Futura, the parent corporation of Nostra, one short city block away. He had one rather peculiar need: he came with two guns in his pocket, placed them conspicuously on the table, saying, "Now I feel like working." The irony was obvious: if the Nazi troopers found this hideout then our guns would have been of no avail. Imre poked fun at this as well as some other illusions that blurred our sense of proportions. In any case, the hideout was optimally safe from accidental discovery. As a matter of fact, this place was not the weak link in the student resistance movement which would cause our arrests in mid-December.

The print shop's smooth operation paved the way toward involvement in additional projects in the student underground movement. By the end of the summer, and particularly after October 15, the safe in my office became a clearing house for personal documents. Initially, the task appeared rather simple as long as I adhered to the strictest rules of precaution. Sándor Kiss, assuming for this operation the name of Gábor Tóth, asked me to accept, safekeep and distribute blank documents issued by governmental departments and military headquarters. We were using them illegally, but in appearance these documents were perfect: printed on the appropriate paper, stamped with the official seal and signed by the appropriate office holder. I was to

complete such a document by writing in the user's name. Usually, the object was to facilitate safe conduct for someone to accomplish a mission. Quite often, however, the objective was to assist a person to escape persecution. With the passage of time these documents became used in increasing number simply to shelter deserters from the armed forces. In exchange for a military passport, the bearer agreed to deliver our printed publications to distant places and then to return for another sojourn. In time things became quite complex. At the outset I stored military documents from a few auxiliary commands. Later I was in charge of impressive looking documents from the Supreme Command supplied by General Staff Captains István Tóth and Zoltán Mikó. One innovative distributor of these rather sensitive papers was Foreign Ministry officer Géza Kádár with whom I regularly met in the bookstore on Múzeum Boulevard. It was also here that I repeatedly met Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who coordinated a network involved in saving Jews in Budapest from Nazi brutalities. Occasionally I supplied him with military documents issued for names he specified and subsequently we met twice at the Gyáli Road Nostra warehouse to work out special arrangements for a consignment.

Another project of the Free Life Student Movement wherein I had a role was the Görgey Zászlóalj (Görgey Batallion). I recall the initial discussions to form a batallion of volunteers with the ostensible purpose of defending Budapest against the Russians, but with the real aim of preventing the use of the unit elsewhere. The secret design was to pull together several hundred men into a military unit that would seek contacts with the Red Army approaching Budapest in order to collaborate with them in minimizing destruction and loss of lives. Captains Mikó and Tóth secretly endorsed the plan and appointed Vilmos Bondoi as the unit's senior lieutenant as supply officer. Three friends, Endre Csohány, Károly Nagy and Kálmán Drozdy, became the commanding officers. Additional posts were filled with people recommended by the Free Life Student Movement and many from the Hársfa Street Student Home. Zoltán Nyeste and István Füzesi became influential activists. The Kaláka Movement and the Tutaj Street Apprentices' Hostel became briefing stations as we covertly campaigned to fill the ranks with trustworthy young students and workers. During this process I had given out many

of the conventional auxiliary command forms entitled "Order to Report." Noteworthy among our schemes was an attempt to divert the Arrow-Cross snoopers' suspicion. To this end we wanted to create the impression that the batallion was a hot-bed of right-wing extremists who were despised by the left-wing underground. We planned an attack on the guard post. Three students, Tibor Zimányi, Károly Derecskey and Géza Bodolay, implemented the plan, throwing a hand grenade while ascertaining that no one should be hurt. The next day *Free Life* reported that the event was only a first warning to the pro-Szálasi Görgey Batallion. Apparently, the deception did work because the suspicions of Arrow-Cross functionaries subsided for a while.

Perhaps the most daring of our ideas was the "Second Szálasi Manifesto." Although never fully implemented, it might be appropriate to outline the project here in order to shed light on the resourcefulness of the individuals involved. In short, the project was to write, print and post in several thousand copies a manifesto patterned after the one by Szálasi during the October 15 *coup d'état*. That time Szálasi in his "Supreme Command to the Armed Nation" gave reasons for his assuming power, for pursuing the war on Hitler's side until the end, and for re-shaping Hungary in the Arrow-Cross spirit. This time we designed a fake "Second Supreme Command to the Armed Nation" in the name of Szálasi, which declared that (1) the Germans use Hungarians as cannon fodder in the war; (2) Germany betrayed the alliance with Hungary; (3) honourable peace will be worked out with the Russians, British and Americans; (4) the armed forces including the Party Brigades will offer free passing to the Russian Army in forcing out the German Army. This bogus manifesto carefully imitated the jargon of Szálasi and copied phrases from his genuine manifesto a few weeks earlier. The printing itself was to imitate fully physical appearances: typeset, paper quality and the size of the poster. Therefore, the work was to be done at the Pester Lloyd Printing Company, the producer of the original manifesto. The place was the right choice also because it produced no newspaper currently—merely governmental supplies—and therefore it was guarded by soldiers and not Party armed guards. The whole process at the printing plant was spelled out in minute details by András Hamza and his team, including Gyula Ibrányi, Imre Bense, Sándor Arany, with the assurance of support from the Görgey Batallion. The special

written order to assure access to the printing press was forged in the name of Béla Kerekes, Deputy Minister of Justice, and endorsed by Emil Kovarcz, Propaganda Minister. The project was aborted because of security considerations one day before operation, and was to be re-scheduled later. There was no second chance for this mission, nor was there a chance to pursue others in progress because of several arrests.

In Captivity

My recollection is that the day was December 14, Thursday morning, as I began to work at my desk, when two men in civilian clothes entered my office while a third one stayed at the door. I guessed their business as my eyes surveyed the three figures: one wrestler-framed, one girlish-faced and one lanky. The wrestler moved behind my chair while the girlish-faced said, "We are looking for Mr. Horváth." Pretending absent-minded shuffling of account vouchers, I attempted to bury my coded notebook. "We want that," he continued in a steely voice while flashing an identification card, "and you come with us." The wrestler pushed a gun against my shoulder blade and with his chest shoved me toward the room's centre. They tied my hands tightly and led me to the street where I was ushered into a limousine marked, "Voluntary Ambulance Association of Budapest." A resourceful decoy, I thought while I was being rushed inconspicuously through the avenues of Buda into the yard of the Military Prison on Margit Boulevard.

Immediately I was led into a large room where each of the three men took note pads and pencils into their hands. The wrestler said, "You talk; we write." As I remained silent they looked at me and at each other with apparent surprise. When I continued with silence the girlish-face stepped toward me and said in a flat tone, "Mr. Horváth, you got nabbed. Your friends are arrested also. Almost the whole crazy group got caught. We need you to piece together all the details. Realize it; you made mistakes of judgment and you became involved in a deadly, grave underground conspiracy. You assist us so that we can help you. Think for a few minutes. We will leave you here alone." All three left the room and then came back parading before me two fellow students. The episodes were intended to prod me to talk. By now all three argued that I should talk. Indeed, having seen

two of my friends in captivity, I felt that it would not be a viable strategy to remain speechless. I remembered a scenario rehearsed a few times during the previous weeks: the rational behaviour should be to devise a scaled-down story made up of events, places and persons obviously known already to the interrogators. Notwithstanding the risk involved in their discovering my scheme and therefore retaliating with harsh treatment, still this appeared to be the logical attitude when loyalty and self-preservation complement one another.

Soon it turned out that my captors were in a hurry. They escalated the process of interrogation by resorting to a whole gamut of physical and psychological cruelties during the subsequent days....* I surmised from the thrust of the inquiry that my interrogators' prime target was to capture more of our fellow students still at large. They kept throwing names at me; with some I was in direct underground operation, others were part of our movement, still others I had met in the past but had no current operational ties with, some were persons I had only heard about, and finally, some were wholly unfamiliar individuals. Within the student movement Emil Májsay, Vilmos Fitos and Antal Gyénes were the main targets. Within the higher political sphere they scrambled the names of Zoltán Tildy, Béla Varga, Ferenc Nagy, Pál Auer, Vince Vörös, Imre Kovács, Gyula Dessewffy and others. Three questions dominated this wrangle: (1) When did I see him? (2) When will I meet him next? (3) Where was he at this time? So they were on a fishing expedition, I inferred, and risked dodging as many questions as I felt possible. Apparently, they were frustrated with my lengthy stories....

Shortly I was back in the interrogation room. Again Lajos Fehér, Vilmos Fitos and Emil Májsay were the targets of inquiry. I claimed that I was scheduled to meet Májsay that week one afternoon on the Kálvin Square, but could not remember the exact day and hour without deciphering my pocket calendar. They produced my calendar pages for the week, and I pretended that a disguised entry on the day after tomorrow, Saturday

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* Editor's note: Many personal details of Horváth's interrogation have been omitted.

afternoon at two o'clock, was a coded reminder to meet Májsay. Whether the gamble worked or the captors needed a rest, I was led to the prison building.

Cell 105 of the Military Prison was a large room at the northeast end of the third floor. In two lines on straw sacks there were about 25 men lying. My escort meditatively assigned a cot to me around the middle of the left side row.... I awoke with a sharp pain in my feet and head. It was daylight and my roommates told me that I missed the breakfast because I did not respond either to words or shaking.

As I recall this was the morning when Gyula Szentadorjány was added to the cell's population. The interrogation resumed just before noon and lasted until evening. For a change there was no beating.... They took me into a group meeting with the three inquirers, occasionally with only one of them. Repeatedly there were other people in the room behind me, but I was forced to look into a bright flourescent light. The questioning added up to a potpourri of everything: the review of hundreds of photographs, how could religious people talk with communists, who was Jewish or communist in the student resistance, who were communists in the Peasant Federation; have Zoltán Mikó, István Tóth and Vilmos Bondor visited the Nostra office, how to locate Tibor Hám, István Csicsery-Rónay, Péter Veres, Pál Fábry, Gyula Totka; what did I know about the disguised ambulance limousine, etc. Whenever in talking I mentioned the name of Count Pál Teleki, the former Prime Minister and boy scout idol, they showed irritation. Next morning I was shaved, given a bigger pair of shoes and even my torn winter coat got mending. Repeatedly they rehearsed with me the anticipated *rendezvous* with Emil Májsay. I went through the motions with mixed feelings because in truth there existed no arrangement with Májsay. The decoy ambulance limousine took us to the Kálvin Square; four persons sat with me and they pointed at another civilian automobile in escort. They impressed me with the loaded guns in their pockets so that I should not think of any careless move while awaiting Májsay on the street. After 25 minutes of waiting, I was led back to the limousine and the caravan returned to the prison.

Their disappointment was not disguised. While riding in the limousine they gave me the ultimatum: "Lead us to the hiding place of Májsay if you want to save your skin!" I did not know his

hideout and noted that he must have learned about the arrest of all his colleagues, so he obviously disappeared. I even complimented their remarkable skill in catching all of us. Presently their furour was poured on me....

In cell 105 the evening of December 24, Christmas Eve, was the ending of another routine day. We could hear from the constant coming and going in the building that the investigating squads did not slow down; they wanted to wind up the case of the student underground movement. The news spread that they will take no holiday recess; the first day of Christmas they write the indictments, the second day the martial court will pronounce the sentences, and a minimum of three persons will be executed immediately—Sándor Kiss, Tibor Zimányi and myself—yet the number may go up to six. By midnight the place quieted down, but not for long; and then the approaching gunfire could be heard. These were the hours when the Soviet Army encircled Budapest and among other advances one tank unit reached Széna Square, about one kilometer from our prison. The next morning all the prisoners—about 80 persons—were led to a courtyard and one-by-one ushered into waiting buses. My name was read off among my colleagues' by the sergeant-major. Indeed, these were the short minutes when I saw my four captors in gendarme uniforms with sickle feather at the cap, each also displaying the Arrow-Cross ensign.

Swiftly the bus convoy started to move but instead of travelling the highway toward Germany, they approached the Pest District Prison on Main Street. This had been for months the German Gestapo prison. Immediately after registration, German officers with swastika arm bands began to deal with our case. Within hours I was taken to an SS Captain who quickly perused the documents on his desk and apparently noticed the name of Nostra Warehouse Corporation and inquired about my role in the arrangements at the Gyáli Street depot for the Swedish Red Cross and other international agencies. Obviously, he had been investigating something about that because in short intervals two men and a woman prisoner were brought in testing if we knew each other. To this SS Captain I explained in a professional manner the procedures a warehouse employs in dealing with clients in general and regarding the Red Cross consignments in particular. After about an hour of inquiry, suddenly the telephone rang and the Captain must have received a call from a

higher authority because he stood up and clicked heels. Within seconds he rushed out of the room in overcoat, and after another hour one of his deputies took me back to a prison cell. In this room there were several people; among them two French prisoners of war, one Polish officer and Count Miklós Eszterházy, a member of the Upper House of Hungarian Parliament.

Our stay in the Main Street Prison turned out to be brief because in a few days we were transferred into the basement of the Parliament building. Instead of automobile transportation, we were lined up in pairs to walk, guarded on both sides by German SS soldiers. Several episodes of this march have been inscribed in my memory. The incentive to cross the bridge fast was obvious because of the scattered artillery fire. Yet the trudging column could move only as fast as some of the prisoners could drag themselves. On the bridge pavement there were dead bodies, defunct vehicles and bomb craters. My wretched feet could hardly carry me, so my colleagues offered assistance. One memorable assistance was offered in the form of a walking stick by István Kemény, a medical student, who had permission to keep it due to a lame leg. Dragging on with the column was a must because of the familiar rule: whoever held up the process or fell out of line could be shot on the spot. Leaning on the borrowed cane and limping in stride, suddenly the end of my stick got stuck in an ice cleft. It did not yield and as I tried with a jerk to free it, the handle separated from the stick and there was in my hand a two-foot long dagger. A terrifying experience: could the Gestapo guards miss noticing the event and had they any alternative but to shoot the holder of the dagger? Perhaps the lifesavers were those two artillery mines that exploded on our half of the bridge at this very second. The guards shouted, "Take cover! Lie down!" Everybody did; guards and guarded ones shared a divine community of interest for a few seconds. In this melee I managed to free the butt of the walking stick so as to re-assemble it with the handle. My miraculous survival here became fatally accentuated only a few seconds later, when a member of our column slipped into a bomb crater to disappear into the icy Danube River. After another trying half an hour we were herded into the Parliament building to be kept there in the basement of the Upper House for about ten days.

The German Gestapo unit guarding us was commanded by a reserve officer Captain, a medical doctor in civilian life. He kept

shouting with a high-pitched voice and accused Hungarians of being ungrateful to the Germans; his oratory usually ended with hailing Hitler, and predictions of final German victory. His unit was charged with investigation as well as with meting out sentences. There was some investigation because there were delays during which certain contacts with the outside world evolved. A few persons received medicine, blankets and food from outside. I was the beneficiary of all these goods brought by the Reverend András Hamza. His courage was quietly appreciated by those of us who knew his prominent role in the preparation of the fake Szálasi manifesto and in other projects. During our stay in the basement of the Parliament building, we recovered somewhat from the tortures at the Military Prison. The twelve students of the Independence Movement were able to exchange words. These twelve were: Sándor Kiss, Tibor Zimányi, Pál Jonás, Zoltán Nyeste, István B. Rácz, Lajos Imre, István Fiam, István Kristó-Nagy, Miklós Takácsi, Ernő Bálint, Ottó Elek and myself. Also, István Kemény allied himself with us during those concluding weeks, even though his arrest was due to activities separate from ours. During these days we could pull together for meditation over the Bible and the quiet singing of psalms, usually around Sándor Kiss. Poetry became another source of sustenance with contributions from everyone and marathon recitals of Ady by Rácz.

Starting around January 10, 1945, there followed several transfers in succession. From the Parliament we were taken to the City Hall where the officials claimed unpreparedness for accepting us. During the negotiations we were held in a corridor when one of our group, István Kristó-Nagy, disappeared. Upon discovering the escape, our guards furiously threatened to decimate us in retaliation, and we were already lined up when a higher-ranking officer reappeared with orders to transport the group. Next, we arrived at the Arrow-Cross National Headquarters at Andrássy Street 60. Here our stay lasted one night. Our next stay was at the Gestapo Headquarters in the Buda Castle. The discipline was strict, and it was felt that the highest ranking security officers of the besieged city might deal with us summarily; but fortunately, they had only blurred vision of our identity and were busy interrogating prisoners of war just captured on the front line. During the whole night we were seated on chairs shivering under the broken windows. The next

morning we were loaded on four trucks. While speeding through the district of Tabán, our convoy was attacked by airplanes spreading machine-gun volleys. The driver halted the trucks; the guards ran into the buildings and the prisoners followed. Here, instead of seeking shelter in the basement, I ran up to the second floor, but could not devise a reasonably safe escape. However, it happened that on this occasion Jonás, Zimányi and Rácz successfully hid in a basement to find their escape. The trucks crossed the bridge to Pest to continue driving northward until another air attack compelled stoppage at the Kossuth Lajos Square. Again everyone tried to find hiding. Running, I just reached the wall of the Parliament building when a volley of bullets swept the pavement only inches before my shoes. Soon we were in the Markó Street Prison, where the warden, seeking instruction from the Ministry of Justice, was referred to the district Arrow-Cross Headquarters.

Soon an Arrow-Cross brigade came to escort us to their headquarters at 2 Szent István Boulevard. By now I gambled my defense on the hope that the investigation papers might have been delayed somewhere in the transfers and therefore I could invent a story of lesser crime or even a simple bureaucratic bungle. But the style of the crew dispelled any illusions. They displayed the most menacing blend of dilettantism, uninhibitedness and self-conceit. They appeared and sounded just as fearful as their reputation while ordering us to march in single line. They kept talking. A very young man at my side holding a submachine gun explained that it took only less than one inch turn of the disc to finish a case and that it was their responsibility to perform all functions of emergency governing. Upon arrival at their headquarters, we were immediately subjected to a screening in the courtyard. One of the staffers—scrutinizing the slope of my forehead and my curly raven black beard—speculated that I was a Jew, and he dropped the hypothesis only after further anatomical inquiry. Then I countered claiming that they ought to send me back to my job at Nostra, a business corporation charged with such vital things as rationing grain supply. Further, I claimed that I was in captivity only because of an incompetent sentry who detained me when one particular identification document remained accidentally in the pocket of another jacket. Soon we were all led to the basement where not much later a small group of us were ordered to stand in the light of an electric

bulb to be viewed by a higher official. This man wore the soldier's uniform, but without insignia. Looking us over, occasionally holding a flashlight into the subject's face, he demanded quick answers. Suddenly, he spotted a grey-haired man and after prodding him to say something, the fatal recognition followed: "I know you. I remember that eight years ago I spoke about National Socialism in Csepel and you ridiculed my speech. You caused the audience to laugh at me. Now you will admit that I was right." This was the interrogation as well as the sentence. The few of us there, including his son, saw him dragged out. He was killed on the Danube bank instantly as the news spread a few weeks later....

The next day I was among forty men taken by guards to the Vörösmarty Street School of the Scottish Mission, which this time was a station of the punitive platoons. We were summoned to join the fight; the ones excelling and surviving would be forgiven, but any sign of hesitation or speculation would be punished with instant death. In the school's auditorium there were about 150 men guarded by Arrow-Cross troopers. In scheming to learn more about the place and conditions I grabbed two buckets and asked a guard to take me to the water tap. He guided me into the basement where after two turns along the semi-dark corridors we spotted the building's only functioning water tap. Having returned with the full buckets and distributed the contents, I set out to repeat the journey alone. At the tap while I was filling the bucket there appeared from around the corner a man with a bucket in his hand. Suddenly I had to rub my eyes. Wrapped in lilac-coloured morning gown there stood Gyula Gombos. A writer himself in the underground movement and fully aware of my predicament, yet at this instant he could hardly decide what was more surprising—that I was alive, or that I was next to him. Quickly he signalled to follow him toward escape. I answered that I wanted to go back for Sándor Kiss, and I hoped to return within a few minutes. So I went back for Sándor, and we met Gyula who led us through an elaborate labyrinth into a remote part of the basement. There in a good-sized family quarter, we were most warmly embraced by other friends: Zoltán Tildy, Albert Bereczky, Viktor Csolnoky, Zoltán Tildy, Jr., and László Tildy. The secluded air-raid shelter household included the wives and other family members. Indeed, the most hunted leader of the Hungarian Independence Movement, Zoltán Tildy—who

became Prime Minister in 1945, President of the Republic during 1946-48, a leader in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956—this time was hiding here under the assumed name of Lajos Nagy, a land surveyor from Transylvania who had actually died a few weeks before.

There was no time to celebrate our escape but only to exchange vital information. It was obvious that we two newcomers had to be whisked out of this place immediately. Shortly, Sándor and I were fed, shaved, clothed for departure. The two Reformed Church ministers, Tildy and Bereczky, lent their clerical dark suits and ecclesiastical mantles to us so that we could walk through the streets pretending to bury the dead of the war. We walked to the Thanksgiving Reformed Church at 58 Pozsony Street where friends—Mihály Hogye, Jolán Tildy and others—sheltered us through three more days until the Russians finally cleared that particular part of Budapest of Germans. In the meanwhile, contemplating the danger of discovery by Arrow-Cross search troopers, we opted for an alternative risk. One might regard it as an application of risk minimization calculus. Even though the tower was riddled with holes from repeated artillery strikes, we chose to await freedom inside a battered nook of the church tower.

Postscript

During the subsequent months, I learned that the twelve members of the Free Life Student Movement survived the last days of Nazi German rule in Hungary. Beginning with early 1945 I observed these people in public life. When the next wave of regimentation hit Hungary, this time sponsored by the imperial overlord Stalin and perpetrated by his domestic viceroy Rákosi, then, alas, the survival rate worsened.* When the Revolution of 1956 shook Hungary and surprised the world, most of us were still there attempting to revive the 1944 platform, namely, representative government, progressive reforms and national independence. Subsequently, almost as an afterthought, several of us tried to preserve the Revolution's real spirit in exile.

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* Out of twelve persons, seven were imprisoned for years.

The fact that I myself survived the turn of 1944 into 1945 could be thought of differently according to the commentator's predilection: either as a random event with very low probability, or as the Almighty God's loving care. Documents in archives subsequently revealed that the Court of National Reckoning had condemned me to death and that only the unexpected encirclemend of Budapest by Russian forces prevented it from carrying out the order. The court-martial prosecutor's role went to Bálint Balassa, Juris Doctor, a senior lieutenant of the gendarmerie. My "execution" was reported throughout the German-occupied regions of Hungary. But unexpectedly, Christmas night my would-be executioners were ordered to the front line and soon after they became part of the élite contingent which fought its way out of besieged Budapest. Additional ironies might be noted at this point. A year later, when Balassa was on trial with his companions, it became public knowledge that his taste for debonaire dressing was complemented with other refined attributes, such as being an accomplished piano player. I neither went to his trial nor gave testimony. He was sentenced to death, but the Head of the State, President Zoltán Tildy, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment in response to pleas from Mrs. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, the widow of the nation's highest martyr, and from Cardinal József Mindszenty who, as Bishop of Veszprém had been detained by Balassa in January 1945. At the request of these two persons, I also signed the recommendation for clemency. Three years later a new trial was scheduled and he was executed. In the meanwhile, however, I had met Balassa as a fellow inmate while the Stalinists held me in prison. During those months, at one of the recurrent shuffling of inmates, he and I were temporarily in the same cell where we carried on a conversation. I was quite conscious of how moral indignation inside me became subdued by contemplative curiosity.

The Hungarian Independence Movement received national and international recognition during 1945. The student resistance movement was highly praised and I, among others, received prestigious awards. On occasions, these awards were further accentuated by recognition from the Allied Control Commission, specifically by the three generals who represented the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Great Britain respectively. Certain events were specially noted, among others my presence at two receptions given by Marshal Voroshilov, who

was the Chairman of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary. Thus according to the inherent dynamics of those times, I was drafted into public life. The political parties of the governing coalition competed for identification with the surviving members of the national resistance movement. I joined the Independent Smallholder Party and working through it, I was elected Member of Parliament and Member of the Budapest Municipal Council. There followed appointments to several advisory, policy-making and executive positions both in the private and public sectors. Indeed, it appears quite difficult to simply summarize this period without running the risk of overstating or understating the process. Let the generalization suffice here that I was involved in economic policy-making, I sponsored a major piece of legislation in Parliament, yet my primary task was to work on a daily basis with Sándor Kiss as Deputy Director at the Hungarian Peasant Federation.

As I look back on the content of this essay, I can think of no more dignified stopping point than to write down that the most important and most meaningful experience of all my working life has been the opportunity to work at the side of Kiss. Because my own participation in the student movement was intertwined with the personality of Kiss, I know that my behaviour and activities were rooted in our friendship. In fact, much beyond the time period recollected here, the two of us maintained and enjoyed through 39 years, until his death in 1982, an unparalleled friendship of warmth, trust and partnership. I never doubted his leadership and he never doubted my loyalty. The very opportunity to work with him amounted to the highest reward I could ever attain.

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Warmonger or Peacemaker: The Role of the Church Re-Examined in the Light of Cardinal Serédi's Diaries

Leslie Laszlo

A Hungarian Marxist historian, Sándor Orbán, in discussing the role of the Church in the Second World War,[1] assigns to the Vatican—in addition to the intrigues of American imperialism—the decisive role in the attack by Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union. From him we learn also that the Hungarian Catholic Church pursued the same policy as the Vatican and incited the fascist leadership of the country, goading it on to war against the Soviet Union. And following the declaration of war, "the organized propaganda of the Hungarian Catholic Church during the first phase of the predatory war against the Soviet Union vindicated and abetted the aggressors to the fullest extent."[2] The author then attempts to prove the complicity of the Church in the grave injuries inflicted on the Soviet Union by quoting priests exhorting the soldiers. According to Orbán, during the entire course of the war the Church did nothing in the interest of peace. He wrote, "the leaders of the Hungarian Catholic Church were far removed from helping the country, even by one step, down from the road of war against the Soviet Union and from freeing her from the camp of the aggressors."[3] And when he described the sufferings of the Hungarian people during the war and the deportations and mass executions under the German occupation and Arrow Cross rule, Orbán emphasized that

> The leaders of the Church did not raise their voices against the domestic bloodshed either that accompanied the continuation of the war.... Not only did the Church fail essentially to raise her voice against Hitler and his Hungarian accomplices, but she hastened to their aid. She saw her chief task in not allowing the war against the Soviet Union, in the service of which Hitler wanted to deploy all the resources of the

> country, to be abandoned. Herein lies the explanation for the fact also that she even cooperated with the supporters of National Leader Szálasi's band in the battle against the Soviet Union and against the liberation of the country....[4] The Church joined forces in its entirety with the Arrow Cross, which was waging an all out struggle against the liberation of the country....[5] The leaders of the Church hated their own people and the liberating Soviet Union so much that they would not make common cause with them in the interest of saving the country.[6]

These are definitely grave accusations, and if they were based on facts then we would have to agree with their author that "the historical blame which the Hungarian Catholic Church must bear for the country's participation in the war and for its consequences is very significant and heavy."[7] However, this is not the way things were. When Hungary, following the bombing of the city of Kassa—the responsibility for which has not been established to this day[8]—declared war against the Soviet Union without first requesting or obtaining the approval of Parliament as required by the Constitution,[9] Prince Primate Jusztinián Serédi lodged a protest both with Regent Horthy and with Prime Minister László Bárdossy. In his diary,[10] Serédi noted that

> It is probable that Parliament, together with me, would have voted against a declaration of war even if it had been quite clearly established that Kassa had been bombed by Russian planes, a note of protest, demanding compensation, could have settled this incident far more practically than by entering into a war in which hundreds of thousands of our country's youth were bound to perish, immense damage be suffered and millions of money spent not to speak of the constant uncertainty and the tormenting, unspeakable suffering caused by the war to every Hungarian citizen.[11]

This declaration of war on the Soviet Union was followed several months later, on December 6, 1941, by Great Britain's declaration of war on Hungary. In connection with this, Cardinal Serédi wrote:

> Through the Holy See I tried to prevent this declaration of war, but Cardinal Maglione, the Secretary of State, replied in a telegram that all

intervention was now useless as this step had now been fully and irrevocably decided on. Yet I still hoped that it might not go beyond the breaking off of diplomatic relations that the conflict could be still avoided, and especially that air attacks on our country could be prevented.[12]

About the circumstances surrounding Hungary's declaration of war on the United States, the Prince Primate wrote the following:

> After the British declaration of war the Bárdossy government decided to forestall the United States by declaring war on America first. Again without obtaining the consent of Parliament. Perhaps the Government thought that America was far away and that therefore this declaration would have no practical consequences for us on the other hand, they were doing something to please their German ally. Since then often enough we have experienced the practical consequences in destructive air attacks....
>
> Before the declaration of war I had two long conversations with the American Minister to Hungary. He told me that he had studied conscientiously the history and present situation of our country. And as he saw that many injustices had been done to Hungary, he considered it the purpose of his mission to try and support the just causes of Hungary. I quoted some instances (the question of Anglo-Italian sanctions, etc.) and pointed out that, in the outside manifestations of our political life and in judging these manifestations, the circumstances of heavy pressure must not be forgotten, for they had had a great influence on our decision. The Minister understood my allusion and when he called on Bárdossy to be handed the declaration of war, he said himself that according to his knowledge the Hungarian Government was acting under pressure, which had given him a certain reassurance.
>
> How the declaration of war actually took place I cannot elucidate. But it is the naked truth that we are in the war up to our neck and that all its terrors have been let loose upon our much-suffering nation. I told Bárdossy and the Regent as well that it might not be difficult to enter the war, but it would be most difficult to get out of it unharmed.[13]

In spite of the lack of success that attended his attempts to prevent the declaration of war, Cardinal Serédi continued to

work for the cause of peace. When in early March of 1942 the Regent appointed Miklós Kállay Prime Minister,[14] giving him instructions to try to extricate the country from the German alliance and to restore peace with the Allied Powers,[15] the Prince Primate, as well as all other ecclesiastical leaders, endorsed and supported this policy of the government directed toward peace.[16] Cardinal Serédi assisted Kállay in drafting the memorandum which the latter submitted to Pope Pius XII in January of 1943 and in which he requested the intervention of His Holiness in the interest of the restoration of peace.[17] Kállay wrote in his memoirs, "the memorandum was a cry for help, a supplication from the eastern borders of Catholicism to the head of the Roman Catholic Church and through him to the Catholics and Christians of the whole world."[18] Unfortunately, although Pius XII received the memorandum with the greatest sympathy and discussed in person the matters contained therein with Kállay during the latter's visit to Rome in March, it could not bear results, since the Pope was himself powerless to do anything the belligerents did not want to hear of any peace mediation by the Holy See. From the description of Kállay's lengthy audience with the Pope,[19] it becomes clearly evident that Pius XII was tremendously moved by the horrible inhumanity of bolshevism, and even more of German Nazism, as well as by the suffering which the war caused all over the world. As a result, his most fervent wish and all his efforts were directed toward the achievement of a just and equitable peace at the earliest possible time, which would involve abandoning total war and the mad idea of unconditional surrender. The Pope did not, however, see much hope for this so long as the opposing Great Powers, namely the German Reich and the Soviet Union, languished under the terroristic rule of fanatical dictators. His Holiness nevertheless expressed his willingness to undertake an initiating step in the interest of peace, if Italy would request this of him. Kállay hastened to inform Mussolini of this. The latter listened with great attention, but made his answer conditional on the consent of Hitler.[20] With this, Kállay's grandiose plan to induce Mussolini to break with Hitler, after which Hungary, Finland and possibly the other East European and Baltic states allied with Hitler would, under Italy's leadership, cease hostilities and conclude a separate peace with the Allied Powers, came to naught.

To return to events in Hungary, we should mention that Prince Primate Serédi approved of the plan that the government entertained to declare Budapest an open city, but he desired to include also the holy places of Hungarian Catholicism, Esztergom and Pannonhalma.[21] During the last days of the war, which inflicted the most devastation on Hungary, the Prince Primate, by then very seriously ill, joined in the demand which the bishops of the Dunántúl addressed to the Arrow Cross government urging the abandonment of the hopeless struggle and the conclusion of an immediate ceasefire.[22] And when the German high command ordered the evacuation of the city of Esztergom, which was the Primate's see, Cardinal Serédi bravely confronted the authorities and called upon the population to remain.[23]

The few facts enumerated above should be sufficient to refute the communist contention that the Church had incited the war and had been an enemy of peace.[24] The even more serious accusation, that the Church collaborated with the Nazis and the Arrow Cross and was their accomplice in the horrible crimes committed against humanity, has been answered elsewhere and need not be repeated here.[25]

NOTES

1. "A magyar katolikus egyházi reakció a Szovjetunió elleni háború támogatói sorában," (The reactionary Hungarian Catholic Church in the ranks of the supporters of the war against the Soviet Union) *Századok* (Centuries), 87, (1953): 108-41.
2. Ibid., p. 119.
3. Ibid., p. 126.
4. Ibid., p. 137.
5. Ibid., p. 139.
6. Ibid., p. 141.
7. Ibid.
8. See C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteen. A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1956/1957), II: 25-32; see also Part I of this volume.
9. Paragraph 13 of Act I of 1920 reserved the right to declare war and to utilize the army outside the borders of the country as prerogatives of the legislature.
10. Cardinal Serédi during the war made notations about the more important political events. The original of these notations is in the Primatial Archive at Esztergom, and a copy on film is in the National Archives in Budapest. My repeated attempts to obtain a microfilm copy were unsuccessful. The National Archives, as well as the trade organization "Kultúra," through which microfilms have to be ordered, both informed me that "it is not in their power" to fulfill my request. The excerpts below were taken from Nicholas Boer who had access to Serédi's *Notes* when he wrote his *Cardinal Mindszenty* (London: B.U.E. Ltd., 1949). A comparison with the original text, belatedly published in Hungary by Pál Rosdy, archivist of the Primatial Archives of Esztergom, under the title "Önvizsgálat vagy önigazolás? Serédi bíboros feljegyzése 1944 őszén" (Self-examination or self-justification? Notes of Cardinal Serédi, written in autumn, 1944) in the Catholic monthly *Vigilia*, XL, No. 3. (March, 1975): 191-5, shows Boer's English rendition to be absolutely faithful, in no need of correction.

11. Boer, p. 85.

12. Ibid., pp. 85-6; cf. Antal Ullein-Reviczky, *Guerre Allemande Paix Russe; Le Drame Hongrois* (Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconniere, 1947), p. 112.

13. Boer, pp. 86-7. This part of Cardinal Serédi's diary is quoted by Orbán also. He deliberately neglects to mention the Prince Primate's protest against the declaration of war on the Soviet Union and explains the steps taken by the Prince Primate to prevent the British declaration of war on Hungary and Hungary's on America by claiming that Cardinal Serédi, in accord with the Vatican, was manoeuvring to get the Western powers on Hitler's side in the war against the Soviet Union and a state of war with the Anglo-Saxon powers did not exactly fit into this scheme. This dilemma must have been all the greater since, according to Orbán, the task of the American Minister to Hungary was to support Hungary in its war against the Soviet Union. (See Orbán's article in *Századok*, 87 (1953), pp. 127-8.)

14. Horthy asked Prince Primate Serédi's advice also in appointing Kállay. See Macartney, II, p. 85.

15. Ibid., pp. 85-7.

16. See Nicholas Kállay, *Hungarian Premier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954): 254, 267.

17. Ibid., p. 168.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., pp. 169-73.

20. Ibid., pp. 173-5.

21. See Boer, p. 23.

22. English translation of the memorandum in *Cardinal Mindszenty Speaks; Authorized White Book* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1949): 217-9.

23. See J. Vecsey, ed., *Mindszenty Okmánytár* (Mindszenty documents), 3 vols. (Munich, 1957), I: 36.

24. It is true that Sándor Orbán's article cited above appeared in 1953, that is, during the era of the "cult of personality"; however, in dealing with this subject communist historiography did not change after Stalin's death. Proof of this is provided by the relevant parts of two works dealing with the relationship of Church and State during the Horthy era, which were published in 1966 and 1967 respectively by the Akadémiai Kiadó (the Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), the publishing house enjoying the greatest scholarly prestige. In the first of these, *A magyar állam és az egyházak jogi kapcsolatainak kialakulása és gyakorlata a Horthy-korszakban* (The development and the practice of the legal relationship between the Hungarian state and the Churches during the Horthy Era), the author, Andor Csizmadia, on page 144 repeats Orbán's assertions regarding the role of the Catholic Church in the Second World War and gives Orbán as his source. And István Kónya in *A magyar református egyház felső vezetésének politikai ideológiája a Horthy-korszakban* (The political ideology of the higher leadership of the Hungarian Calvinist Church during the Horthy Era) makes the same accusations against the Protestant ecclesiastical leaders, primarily László Ravasz, the Calvinist Bishop of the Dunamellék, on pp. 61, 82, 84, 135, 204 and 214-36.

25. See my article, "The Catholic Underground in Wartime Hungary: The Birth of the Christian Democratic Party," in the *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, XXIII, No. 1. (March, 1981): 56-69; and my paper, "The Role of the Christian Churches in the Rescue of the Budapest Jews," presented to the Meeting of the Central and East European Studies Association of Canada in Montreal, June 4-5, 1980. (Editor's note: this paper will be published in future issues of our journal.)

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Book Reviews

Julian Borsányi. *Das Rätsel des Bombenangriffs auf Kaschau, 26 Juni 1941.* (Studia Hungarica, 16) Munich: Ungarisches Institut, 1978, 260 pp.

Who bombed Kassa? Embodied in this succinctly stated question is perhaps the greatest puzzle of modern Hungarian history and one of the major remaining enigmas of World War II in Europe. Hungary's entry into the war was provoked by the bombing of Kassa (Košice) by several aircraft on 26 June 1941. The Hungarian government, ascribing responsibility for the bombing raid to the Soviet Union, quickly enlisted in Hitler's crusade against Communist Russia. From the start, however, questions were raised about the identity of the bombers, and ever since a variety of theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain the mysterious circumstances of the Kassa bombing.

One of the first investigations of the bombing of Kassa was conducted in 1941 by Julian Borsányi, at the time a captain in a technical branch of the Hungarian General Staff. After a hiatus of three decades, Borsányi returned to his investigation. The results of his labours are contained in this book, which represents the most exhaustive study to date of this historical puzzle.

Borsányi has closely examined, and in some cases discredited, some of the traditional sources, accounts, and theories. The testimony of the most famous eyewitness of the bombings, Ádám Krúdy, is shown to be inconsistent and unreliable. A similar skepticism is displayed toward the postwar statements of István Újszászy who was head of Hungarian military intelligence in 1941, and Rudolf Bamler, a former officer in the Abwehr. Both Újszászy, and Bamler claimed that the Kassa bombing was a conspiracy devised by military circles in Germany and Hungary who were eager to draw Hungary into the war. Borsányi is unconvinced. He points out that not a single document relating to a German-Hungarian conspiracy has ever been discovered. Moreover, he finds it "morally and psychologically" impossible to believe that any Hungarian officers could have

condoned or participated in an attack on a Hungarian city.

Yet Borsányi also finds serious weaknesses in the other theories that have been put forward. Could the bombers have been Soviet after all? Despite the discovery of bomb fragments with cyrillic lettering, Borsányi regards this as unlikely. All eyewitnesses, the author asserts, report that the attacking planes had no markings, yet no instance is known in World War II of Soviet planes flying without insignia. In any case, no purpose would have been served by such an attack at a time when the Soviet leadership hoped to keep Hungary neutral.

Another popular theory holds that Slovak (or Czech) pilots were responsible for the bombing. Borsányi acknowledges that there is some circumstantial evidence to support this idea, which apparently was widely accepted in Kassa after the bombing. The pattern of the dropping of the bombs (the post office was a major target) perhaps suggests an act of vengeance by Slovaks unhappy over the cession of territory (including the city of Kassa) to Hungary in 1938. Moreover, in an appendix to his study, Borsányi reports on some new evidence that may, after being verified, strengthen this "Slovak alternative."

After examining all of the evidence and the various theories, Borsányi is forced to concede that the "fundamental questions — who dropped the bombs on Kassa and why — remain open." The author has nonetheless been able to draw several credible conclusions. The bombers, he suggests, came from an east or southeast direction and left in the opposite direction. The aircraft had no insignia, and were not the same planes that had attacked a train in Ruthenia earlier. The Kassa attack was not unsystematic and terroristic, but a planned bombing of specific targets. The bombs that were dropped bore cyrillic lettering.

Although these conclusions and the supporting argumentation represent an important contribution to the study of this controversial question, Borsányi's book is by no means a definitive study. It is true that scholars will be greatly indebted to Borsányi for undertaking the monumental task of contacting virtually every surviving Hungarian who might have pertinent firsthand information about the Kassa bombing. On the other hand, Borsányi himself admits that he is not a trained historian, and his occasional biases and sometimes haphazard treatment of source materials tend to reflect this. Borsányi is too polem-

ical in his evaluation of the work of Marxist historians, even if his criticisms are often justified. By contrast, his sympathetic portraits of László Bárdossy and Henrik Werth will seem to some readers to be both uncritical and unwarranted.

Too often Borsányi draws conclusions on the basis of evidence from individuals who remain anonymous. On one occasion he even cites material from a book whose author and title he no longer can recall. Equally frustrating is the fact that Borsányi's use of published works is less than thorough. For example, though he refers briefly to the important article by Nándor Dreisziger on the Kassa bombing, he does not deal with its thesis or arguments in a systematic way. Only indirectly does he touch on the pertinent works of such historians as Mario Fenyő and György Ránki. My own modest contribution to the historiography of the Kassa bombing appears to be unknown to Borsányi.

Thus, the pursuit of a solution to what Borsányi calls this "tragic mystery" will continue. The true explanation may never be known, at least not until the opening of the pertinent Soviet archives. Until that time, however, Julián Borsányi's book will be a valuable guide and reference work.

University of Cincinnati *Thomas L. Sakmyster*

Anthony Tihamér Komjáthy. *A Thousand Years of the Hungarian Art of War.* Toronto: Rákóczi Foundation, 1982, 210 pp.

This survey of Hungarian military history is the first attempt to address an existing conspicuous vacuum. The author's purpose in presenting this survey in the English language was to heighten awareness of the present Hungarian situation by outlining the country's history from a military perspective. In doing so, he has geared the book to a wide readership, namely: military historians, second and third generation Hungarians, academics, statesmen as well as a general readership.

To gain insight into the formidable task taken on by Professor Komjáthy, one must examine the subject from two angles: scope and intensity. Hungary was an established state with Western Christian orientation years before the battle of Hastings and almost 500 years prior to Columbus' landing on Watling Island.

Hungary's geographic location invited incursion and occupation by the prominent powers of the time: Mongols, Turks, Austrians, Germans and Russians. In short, Hungary's military history is vitally linked to its national development. Any attempt to address a subject that is as intense as it is long is a considerable undertaking.

The task is not made easier by the destruction of Hungarian documents and manuscripts in the wars that ironically enough made that history. Most existing texts (in Hungarian) have strong socialist or pro-Russian slants and are thus too one-sided to be of great value for the serious historian.

Professor Komjáthy has opened the door to a subject that has eluded military historians of the West for some time. His book neatly categorizes the periods and highlights the prominent features such as the little-known lightning raid of Andreas Hadik on Berlin in 1757. He also provides an interesting chapter entitled "Hungarians in Foreign Armies," that documents the activities of Hungarians under foreign flags. Even here he could only skim the surface, not noting the hundreds of Hungarian Hussars who accompanied Emperor Maximillian to found the ill-fated Mexican Empire. Nor does the author mention the Hungarian engineers and artillerymen who cast their lot with Abd-el-Kader in his struggle to resist French penetration of Algeria in the 1840s. The magnitude of the subject is simply too great.

Nonetheless, a balanced criticism calls for comments in the spirit of academic circumspection. First, the title is a curious one. What is the "Hungarian art of war" (not to mention 1000 years of it)? One would be hard pressed to imagine a British or American art of war. Art is the practice and while Hungarian military history does have its peculiarities, the practice of war by Hungarians cannot be ascribed to a single national entity. It is hoped that readers will not judge the book by its title since the book itself is highly worthwhile. Secondly, as Professor Komjáthy has pointed out, Hungarian military history is strongly interwoven with the national spirit. Given this relationship, one would have expected the volume to provide more extensive treatment of the remarkable activities of 1848-1849 that caused an Emperor to abdicate, Metternich (whose very name was synonymous with reaction) to flee into exile, and Austrian armies to fall back on all fronts. It is

questionable under these circumstances whether the Russian intervention provided "only the final blow for the Hungarian freedom fight," as stated by the author. The intense energy of national-liberal feeling provided a force so great that Austrian imperialism simply could not contend with it. The intervention of 200,000 Russians under General Paskievich is better viewed as the turning point to a situation that had chances of success despite the triumph of reaction elsewhere in Europe.

A Thousand Years bears out the anguish of a proud nation struggling for national survival and self-esteem, a nation that because of its location so frequently had to confront a hostile environment. The book shows the pain of the politicians who so frequently had to sacrifice national pride for the nation's own future survival. As well, it provides an insight into the plight of soldiers who too often could not fight for their country and had to leave Hungary because the political realities did not allow them to fight for their cherished ideals. Hungarian military history is also a saga of the conflicts in civil-military relations.

The volume covers much ground. Professor Komjáthy intended it to be a survey that would generate further interest in the area of Hungarian military history. His book is bound to raise questions and spark interest in this previously neglected area.

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Captain Sándor Antal

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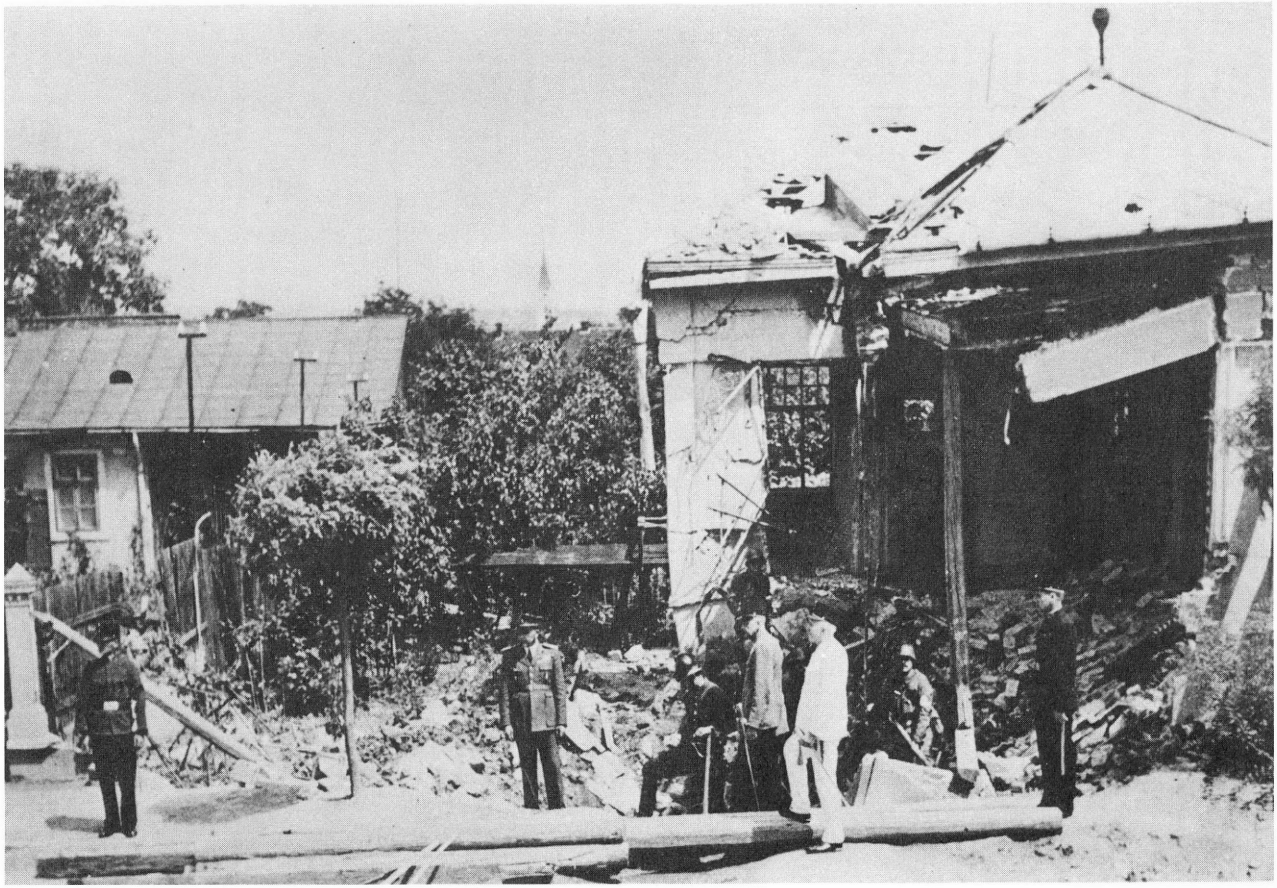
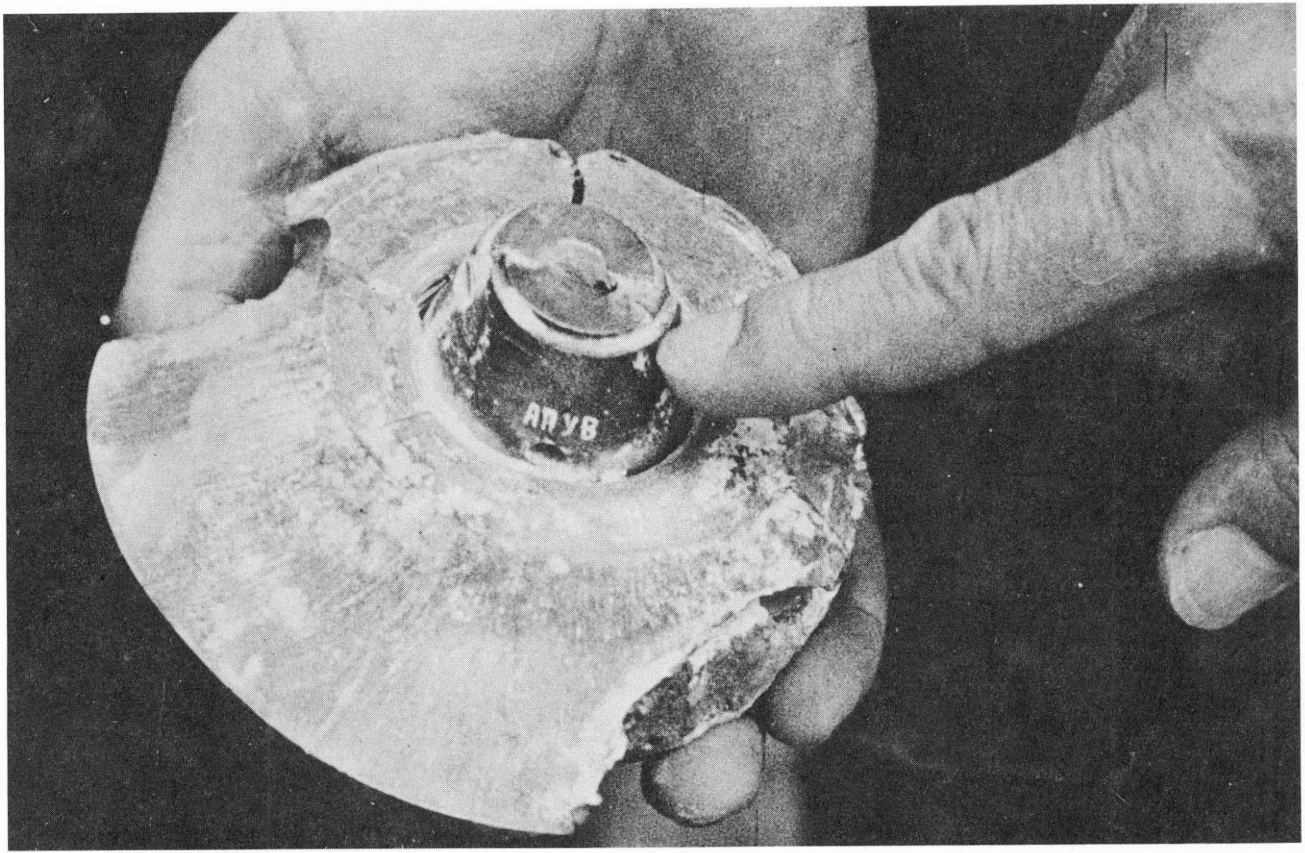
Appendix
Pictures of the Kassa Bombing

The following pages show photographs related to the Kassa raid of June 26, 1941. The first two pictures were taken at the airfield of the Hungarian military aviation school at Kassa on the 25th of June. They show a German warplane and its crew that made an unscheduled landing at the airfield. The two Hungarian air force officers seen in one of these pictures are Ádám Krúdy and Eugene Chirke. When unknown aircraft approached Kassa at about the same time the following day, some of the people at the airfield presumed that they were coming in for an unscheduled landing.

The following pages contain photographs that had been delivered by Hungarian authorities to Major R.C. Partridge, the American Military attaché to Hungary, during July, 1941. They illustrate a small part of the damage that had been inflicted on Kassa during the raid of the 26th of June, as well as close-ups of parts of an exploded bomb with Russian markings. From U.S. military intelligence records we know that some pictures, showing general damage in Kassa after the raid, were given to the American military attaché at the time of his visit to Kassa on the 1st of July, while pictures of close-ups of bomb fragments were sent to him by the head of the Hungarian information service at the end of the month. In forwarding the latter pictures to Washington, Partridge remarked that their "value rests entirely on the good faith of the Hungarian Government." (Major R.C. Partridge to Washington, supplement to Report no. 1344, 31 July 1941. New Military Records, Department of War, National Archives of the United States.)

The first two pictures are courtesy of Mr. Eugene Chirke of Montreal. The rest of the photographs were requested from the National Archives of the United States in 1972. They were declassified in 1973 and delivered to us subsequently.




АПУВ

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