HSR

Hungarian Studies Review

Vol. XXIII, Nos. 1-2 (Spring-Fall, 1996)

Special Volume:

Regent Miklós Horthy, István Horthy and the Second World War

Edited by N.F. Dreisziger

In this special volume Rita Péntek writes about the circumstances and consequences of the election of István Horthy as Hungary's Vice-Regent in 1942; Pál Pritz analyses the relationship of Miklós Horthy and Hitler's special representative in Hungary, Edmund Veesenmayer, immediately after the Nazi occupation of Hungary in March of 1944; N. F. Dreisziger provides commentary on Veesenmayer's testimony to American military intelligence officials in 1945; Thomas Sakmyster comments on two letters that the exiled Miklós Horthy had written to Allied leaders after the war; and Mario Fenyo reviews Thomas Sakmyster's recent biography of Miklós Horthy. This section of this special volume is introduced by Dreisziger in a historiographical essay on Miklós and István Horthy. Part 2 of the volume contains unrelated papers and reviews by Jutka Devenyi, Sándor Agócs and others.

Hungarian Studies Review

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The Editors,
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Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (Spring, 1996)

Part 1 (Spring, 1996)

Special Issue:

Regent Miklós Horthy, István Horthy and the Second World War

Introduced and edited by N. F. Dreisziger

ESSAYS BY:

RITA PÉNTEK

PÁL PRITZ

THOMAS SAKMYSTER

N.F. DREISZIGER

and a review by

MARIO FENYO

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS:

(continued from p. 2)

RITA PÉNTEK is a doctoral candidate at Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem in Budapest, Hungary. Her book on István Horthy is to appear in the near future.

Historian PÁL PRITZ heads the Social Sciences division of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is the author of many books and papers, including an article in last year's volume of our journal. Most of Dr. Pritz's works deal with the political and diplomatic history of interwar and wartime Hungary.

THOMAS SAKMYSTER is Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati and is presently Vice-President of the American Association for the Study of Hungarian History. He is the author of the biography of Miklós Horthy reviewed in this volume, and of the book: *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis, 1936-1939* (U. of Georgia Press, 1980).

(Part 2; fall, 1996 issue)

SÁNDOR AGÓCS is a Professor Emeritus at Wayne State University (Detroit, Michigan). He last published in our journal in 1992. He has also published in the *Journal of Rural Studies, East European Quarterly, East European Politics and Society, University of Dayton Review, Society*, and in the *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies.* Professor Agócs presently lives and writes in Budapest.

JUTKA DEVENYI teaches theatre history at the Actors Studio MFA program at New School for Social Research in New York City. She has written articles in various fields of theatre studies and has directed plays in Santa Barbara, CA and at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. Her major publication is *Metonymy and Drama: Essays on Language and Dramatic Strategy.*

Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. XXIII (1996)

CONTENTS

Part 1 (Spring 1996)

Special Issue:

Regent Miklós Horthy, István Horthy and the Second World War

(continued)

(Contents, cont'd.)

Part 2 (Fall, 1996)

Papers and Book Reviews

OUR CONTRIBUTORS:

(Part 1, Special issue)

MARIO D. FENYO is the author of *Hitler, Horthy and Hungary* (Yale University Press, 1972) and numerous articles and papers on modern Hungarian history. Before assuming his present post at Bowie State University, he had taught at post-secondary institutions in the Caribbean and Africa.

N.F. DREISZIGER is Professor of History at the Royal Military College of Canada. He writes on Hungarian and Canadian subjects. He is currently President of the American Association for the Study of Hungarian History.

(continued on p. 4)

Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (Spring, 1996)

Introduction:

Miklós Horthy and the Second World War: Some Historiographical Perspectives

N.F. Dreisziger

Admiral Miklós Horthy, Hungary's head of state from 1919 to 1944, is probably the most controversial statesmen in modern Hungarian history. His name has been linked to the White Terror of 1919, an outburst of anti-Communism and anti-Semitism that overtook Hungary in the wake of the left-wing revolutions of 1918-1919. He is also widely reputed to have been the main architect of the "semi-feudal" system of aristocratic privilege and authoritarianism that was introduced, some would say restored, in Hungary in 1919-1920. But it is Horthy's actions or omissions in the Second World War that have made him, and to a lesser extent also his family, forever a subject of controversy.

In the eyes of his detractors, Horthy's greatest crime was Hungary's wartime involvement on the side of the Axis which resulted in great suffering and enormous losses for the Hungarian nation by the autumn of 1944, when Horthy's rule came to an end as he was removed by the Germans and incarcerated in the Third *Reich*. In the half-century since the end of World War II Horthy's responsibility for Hungary's fate has been assessed in very different ways.

Hungary's wartime leadership, and, above all, Horthy himself, were almost invariably condemned by commentators in the lands of the Allies. We need not dwell on these opinions, and it should suffice to cite, by way of example, British historian A.J.P. Taylor, who during the war denounced Horthy and his entourage as being the "principal promoters of German imperialism" in East Central Europe.[1] Assessments of Horthy's wartime policies remained negative after the war as well. This was so especially in Hungary where by the late 1940s the country's communist transformation was well on its way. The anti-Horthy rhetoric was particularly virulent in the Stalin era, during the regime of Mátyás Rákosi, the Soviet dictator's quisling in Hungary for much of the period between 1948 and 1956. Such negative views of Horthy persisted well into the 1970s and 1980s,[2] when the intellectual thaw in Hungarian life occasionally allowed more moderate assessments of him to surface.

Outside Hungary opinions were divided. In the Soviet Union itself, views were invariably anti-Horthy.[3] In the Western Allied countries, the kind of views expressed by Taylor near the end of the war persisted after 1945, but there were exceptions. In a book published in 1947, John F. Montgomery, a former American minister to Hungary, defended Horthy's record and condemned, instead, the Allied treatment of Hungary from the post-World War I peace treaties to the early Second World War years.[4] Later British historian C.A. Macartney wrote on the subject of Hungarian foreign policy during the late 1930s and the first half of the 1940s. In effect, he concluded that Hungary's "doom" was "dictated" not so much by the acts or omissions of her leaders, but by "forces far exceeding" those of Hungary.[5] Macartney documented this judgement in a monumental study: *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1944.*[6]

Differences of opinion also existed in the works of historians who were born in Hungary and later became academics in the West. In his book, *The Green Shirts and the Others*, Nicholas Nagy-Talavera suggests that Horthy was lacking both caution and statesmanlike wisdom in 1941. By February of the following year, however, the regent's attitude began "maturing." Nagy-Talavera maintains that "Horthy never desired or believed in German victory although he was sometimes carried away... but the entrance of the United States into the war dissipated the slightest doubt in his mind about the [war's] outcome."[7] Mario Fenyo, another Hungarian-born American academic, rendered a somewhat more critical judgement of Horthy in his study, *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary: German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944*;[8] while the writer of this introduction saw Horthy in a less negative light in his *Hungary's Way to World War II.*[9]

While historians both in the West and the East were rendering their judgements about Horthy from the 1950s to the 1980s, they were reluctant to undertake a biography of him. The first exception to this was Peter Gosztony (originally Péter Gosztonyi) a Hungarian-born historian who has lived in Switzerland since the late 1950s. In 1973 Gosztony published the book *Miklós von Horthy: Admiral und Reichsverweser.*[10] Nearly two decades later, after the collapse of communism in Hungary, it became possible for Gosztony to release this book in Hungary (in Hungarian) as well.[11] Though this work belongs more in the genre of popular rather than scholarly biography, it might be worth examining in detail, especially as it relates to the Second World War period.

Gosztony explores both Horthy's life as a naval officer and his post-1920 career as a statesman. He points out how on more than one occasion Horthy was in the "right place at the right time" to receive boosts in his ascent to prominence. On one of these occasions, in early 1918, Horthy was appointed commander of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. In this promotion nearly fifty officers with more seniority were passed over. Another such occasion happened less than two years later, during the period of communist rule in Budapest, when Hungarian politicians in exile looked to Admiral Horthy as the next Minister of War, mainly because the army generals in their midst would not tolerate the

appointment of anyone of their own to this high position. As he was the only senior admiral available for a prominent role, fate made sure that Horthy would not be doomed to the obscurity to which many senior Habsburg officers had been condemned with the collapse of Austria-Hungary.

Gosztony tells us that Horthy was a conscientious officer who cared for his men and valued loyalty and tradition. When fate thrust a great deal of power into his hands, Horthy refused to use it merely to enhance his personal influence. Horthy expected respect from others, but it was never his wish to become a dictator of his country. Gosztony argues that Horthy deliberately refused to take the path of some of his contemporaries, such as Italy's Benito Mussolini or even Poland's Józef Piłsudski. In some of his moves Horthy demonstrated considerable political acumen. But Gosztony agrees with most of those who have studied Horthy that his conservative upbringing and outlook prevented him from accepting many of the new ideas and ideals of the twentieth century. The regent was suspicious of all radicalisms and hated communism with a particular vehemence. Horthy's sympathy for the Hungarian peasant did not extend to Hungary's masses of agrarian labourers, or to her workingmen. While he did not initiate the White Terror that became widespread in parts of Hungary after the collapse of Béla Kun's Commune, Horthy was slow to curb it and reluctant to bring its perpetrators to account. On the controversial question of Horthy's anti-Semitism, Gosztony comes to the conclusion that the admiral was not a hater of Jews, but no philo-Semite either. Horthy's feelings toward Jews was what one might call "armchair anti-Semitism," quite different from the anti-Semitism of people such as Adolf Hitler.

Throughout most of the 1920s Horthy was content to leave the administration of Hungary to his prime ministers, in particular to István Bethlen. In the 1930s, with the Great Depression, the increased influence of right-radical ideologies, and growing international instability, Horthy found himself involved in high-level decision making on several occasions. Gosztony rarely finds grounds for criticizing Horthy for the stands he took on those occasions. Many historians, and even memoir writers, have condemned Horthy for not doing more to prevent Hungary's complicity in the German attack on Yugoslavia in April of 1941, but Gosztony does not. He argues that in light of Hungary's past record of friendship toward Germany, a denial of Hitler's request for passage through Hungary would have been provocative and therefore not possible. Nor does Gosztony blame Horthy for Hungary's declaration of war on the Soviet Union and the United States. For this Gosztony places the blame squarely on the shoulders of the then prime minister, László Bárdossy.

In his sympathetic treatment of Horthy, Gosztony goes so far as to say that Horthy realized, long before other Axis statesmen, that Hitler would not have a quick victory in Russia, and Horthy began to guide Hungary's fate accordingly. His first act was to dismiss the chief-of-staff, the pro-German Henrik Werth, in the fall of 1941. In early 1942 he continued his efforts and replaced Prime Minister Bárdossy with Miklós Kállay, under whose leadership

parliamentary government, respect for human rights, freedom of the press, and protection for refugees from Axis lands were the order of the day — to a greater extent than in any other Axis country. Many German demands were denied by Kállay, and contacts were made with Allied agents to prepare for Hungary's defection from the German camp. These contacts had only limited success, however, as Hungary's defection hinged on British and American troops reaching her borders.

Gosztony explicitly approves Horthy's choice of Kállay as Hungary's leader in those difficult times, and he even acquits the regent for some of his own actions during this period. Gosztony refutes the charges, made by the regent's contemporary and latter-day critics, that Horthy intended to set up a "Horthy dynasty" when he arranged that his son be made deputy regent. This act, according to Gosztony, was designed to make sure that if the elder Horthy was prevented from performing his duties as head of state — by illness, death, or abduction — Hungary would have a leader who would have the respect of her people and whose sympathies were squarely with the English and the Americans.

Gosztony also disagrees completely with those detractors of the regent who have suggested that when in March of 1944 Hitler threatened to occupy Hungary, Horthy should have resigned. By staying on, Gosztony argues, the regent made the best choice in a very difficult situation.

The occupation of Hungary by the *Wehrmacht* in March of 1944 was a watershed in the country's wartime history. In its wake the full burden of total war was to be visited on the country's people. Hitler insisted on the appointment of a pro-Nazi government, on Hungary's full support for the Axis war effort, and on the "solution" of Hungary's "Jewish question." Starting with the spring of 1944, Hungary lost her immunity from Allied bombing raids, while opposition elements were dealt with by the Gestapo who often acted as if they operated in occupied *enemy* territory. Furthermore, the deportation of Hungary's Jews started under the supervision of the Gestapo's "Jewish Evacuation" expert, Adolf Eichmann.

For a while Horthy watched these developments as if he were in exile, but in June 1944 he began to take steps to try to ameliorate Hungary's sad situation. He appealed to Hitler to stop the Germans' worst excesses. Horthy also consulted with his most trusted soldiers on the matter of armed resistance to German rule and he then replaced the government the Germans had insisted on in March, and appointed a military cabinet whose task it was to prepare Hungary's exit from the war. Earlier, he had stopped the deportations of Jews from Hungary, just before these were to be extended to the large Jewish community of Budapest. It is only in this connection that Gosztony expresses regret that the regent had not acted sooner.

By the summer of 1944 Horthy's days as regent of Hungary were numbered. He was determined to end Hungary's involvement in the war, and persisted even after he was told by the Allies that he would have to surrender unconditionally to the Soviets. Gosztony concludes that Hungary's attempt to

leave the war failed mainly for two reasons. The Germans found out about it and took timely counter-measures (such as abducting Miklós Horthy Jr., who was by then Horthy's only child still alive), and pro-German elements of Hungary's officer corps deserted Horthy and his few loyal generals in the hour of their greatest need. His *coup* having failed, Horthy was forced to resign and was taken into German custody, while his son was interned in Mauthausen.

Gosztony explains why Horthy was not treated as a war criminal after the war. Marshall Tito's efforts to put Horthy on trial were resisted by the British and the Americans, while the similar designs of Hungary's communists were discouraged by Stalin who apparently saw no need to try the "old man." So, in 1948 Horthy was allowed to start his exile in Portugal. To save him from destitution, some of his sympathizers established a fund for him. Among those who were responsible for this was the above-mentioned John Montgomery, as well as a handful of Hungarian Jews, In exile, Horthy stayed away from emigre politics, but remained a keen observer of world events and of developments in Hungary. The crushing of the Hungarian Revolution by the Soviets late in 1956 dealt a great blow to his morale. He died early in the next year at the ripe old age of 88.

In North America Horthy found a biographer in an American academic, Professor Thomas Sakmyster of the University of Cincinnati. His preliminary study of Horthy appeared in 1989 in a volume of essays on twentieth-century Hungarian statesmen.[13] In the introductory paragraphs Sakmyster pointed out that, though Horthy had no experience as a diplomat, he was one of the few statesmen who was "able to hold his own against Adolf Hitler." In regards to the regent's alleged anti-Semitism, Sakmyster reminds his readers that this "notorious" anti-Semite is "often credited with saving" the Jewish community of Budapest in 1944. Yet, Sakmyster admits, Horthy was hardly suited by his training and intellect to lead a nation in wartime. His linguistic abilities notwithstanding (Horthy spoke several languages), the regent's intellectual capacity can be described as "modest at best," and his perspective on politics as "narrow and unsophisticated." All in all, Sakmyster suggests, Horthy would have been more at home in eighteenth-century society than in the world of the twentieth.

The controversial subject of Horthy's relationship with Hitler is explored by Sakmyster in some detail. Horthy had misgivings about the German leader because of the latter's vulgarity and predilection for theatrics. The regent, however, was impressed by Hitler's success in destroying the Versailles settlement, and was attracted by his hostility to communism and Czechoslovakia. Yet in August of 1938, when Hitler told Horthy that he wanted to move against the Czechs, Horthy responded by refusing to promise his country's cooperation in such a venture and by warning the *Führer* that in a European war England would prevail. Events of the next two years, however, did much to erode Horthy's distaste for collaboration with Germany. The collapse of France, and the regaining of lost Hungarian territories with the help of Germany, made Horthy more prone to going along with the Germans. Not surprisingly, in the

crises of the spring of 1941, Horthy failed to prevent Hungary's involvement in the war on Germany's side, first against Yugoslavia, and then against Soviet Russia.

No sooner had the decision to join Germany been made than second thoughts began to develop in the minds of the leaders in Hungary. Already in September, 1941, Horthy was warned of a "long and bloody war" in which Hungary could gain nothing. The defeat of the German armies at Stalingrad, and of the Hungarian 2nd Army at Voronezh, gave further impetus to Hungarian efforts to leave the war. Despite secret negotiations with the Allies to this end, Hungary could not get out of the tentacles of the German alliance. If anything, evidence of Hungary's duplicity stiffened Hitler's resolve to occupy the country.

At home Horthy resisted calls for ending the pluralistic political system that had prevailed in Hungary since the 1920s. The socialist and liberal opposition continued to be tolerated and Jews were protected, despite demands from Berlin — and from radical right-wing elements in Hungary — to the contrary. All this ended in 1944. In March Hungary was occupied by the *Wehrmacht*, and after the ill-fated attempt of October 15th to sign an armistice with Russia, Horthy was removed from power.

In the final analysis, Sakmyster absolves Horthy of the worst charges of his detractors. He reminds us that in Horthy's prisons communist leaders survived, while many of their colleagues were slaughtered in Stalin's Russia. In early 1944, Sakmyster adds, "Hungary was the only country in Hitler's Europe to preserve a semblance of the rule of law and a pluralistic society." He suggests that Horthy should be "regarded as the last of the Hungarian kings." He had carried out his responsibilities as head-of-state "in a dignified and dutiful manner. Like many successful monarchs, he became a symbol of authority and a link with a more glorious national past." Horthy could have used this authority to establish a dictatorship, Sakmyster argues, but he did not do this because he believed that inhumanity was not a "Hungarian quality," and because he had a "fundamental respect for Hungarian political traditions." Thus, Horthy became the victim of circumstances far beyond his ability to control.

Half a decade after the appearance of his preliminary study, Sakmyster's biography of Horthy was published: *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944*. As it is reviewed in this volume, and Sakmyster's overall conclusions have been outlined above, we will not dwell on this work in detail, though it certainly deserves more attention than it has received so far.[14] Nevertheless, the assessment of Sakmyster's book by one of North America's foremost experts on modern Hungarian history might be worth examining. The expert is István Deák of Columbia University, and his views appeared in a recent issue of *The Hungarian Quarterly*.[15] Deák has deemed Sakmyster's political biography "accurate" and "strongly critical" whenever necessary, yet "not lacking in sympathy for Hungary and its Regent."[16] Deák goes on:

> What readers will be intrigued to discover is the intellectual mediocrity of a man who rose,... to become Austria-Hungary's only successful naval commander during the Great War.... Further, by 1920 Horthy had made himself the uncontested leader of his country.... Although both his courtiers and he himself vastly overestimated his popularity, he seems to have been hated only by the political far Right and the far Left. Moreover,... Horthy, the anti-Semite,... was seen by most Jews as their ultimate protector against fascism and Hitler. Interestingly, Horthy was not very different, in respect to intellect, from other successful conservative strong men who dominated Europe in that period, the closest comparison being Generalissimo Francisco Franco. The Spanish leader was duller and, if possible, even less insightful than Horthy, but won a bloody civil war, then imposed his will on a turbulent nation, and finally handed over a prosperous country to a democratically minded king and political parties. Horthy, of course, was not so lucky as to rule in isolated Spain.[17]

And, at the end of his article Deák concludes:

> Miklós Horthy himself was neither better nor worse than most other military men who emerged as political leaders in the interwar years. He was neither a fascist nor a liberal... He was no democrat but never tried to be a dictator. He claimed to have been a lifelong anti-Semite; still, under his reign and despite the deportations, more Jews survived the Nazi terror than in any other country within Hitler's Europe. He was no more unintelligent than Marshal Pétain or Generalissimo Franco, and he was certainly less cruel than General Antonescu of Romania....[18]

The last word in this historiographical overview of Horthy should go to Professor Sakmyster as the author of the first truly scholarly biography of Hungary's regent from 1920 to 1944:

> It was largely through [Horthy's] influence that in early 1944 Hungary was... an anomaly: an island in the heart of Hitler's Europe where a semblance of the rule of law and a pluralistic society had been preserved.... And this was the basis of Horthy's most important legacy.... Though for the most part he did not share their views or approve their objectives, Horthy made it possible for the adherents of democratization, liberalism, parliamentary government, and social reform to maintain a precarious foothold in Hungarian society, so that when the totalitarian tide eventually receded from Hungary, they would be on hand to take part in the rebuilding of the country.[19]

* * *

Miklós Horthy has been the subject of many studies. His son István Horthy, however, has not attracted the attention of historians or, where he has, what was written about him was part of a commentary on his father. In books on the elder Horthy, István might receive a few paragraphs,[20] while in papers on Miklós Horthy, István might get a footnote. Quoting from one of these, written by István Deák, should suffice as an illustration of the more scholarly assessments of the son: "István Horthy was a liberal and a friend of the Jews and he hated the Nazis. His accidental death at the front as a combat pilot, in August 1942, was a tragedy for Hungary."[21]

In 1992 a collection of documents and other contemporary writings about István Horthy was published as a result of the efforts of his widow. It appeared under the title *Horthy István repülő főhadnagy tragikus halála* [The Tragic Death of Flight Lieutenant István Horthy].[22] In the introduction, István Horthy's widow argues that the documents effectively refute the then contemporary rumour — spread no doubt by her husband's detractors — that István Horthy had a hang-over the day he went on his fateful mission on the Russian front. She also suggests that nothing in the documents reduces the then contemporary suspicions — whispered no doubt by anti-German elements — that the young Horthy's plane might have been sabotaged by the Nazis or agents working for them.[23]

* * *

The collection of papers and documentary articles presented in this volume aims to add to the picture we have of Miklós Horthy, his eldest son, and Hungary during the Second World War.

Historian Rita Péntek's study of the election of István Horthy as deputy regent in early 1942 places that event into its wider historical and political, domestic as well as international, context. Péntek begins with an examination of the long-term and immediate origins of these developments. The long-term had to do with the desire of the elder Horthy, as well as many others in Hungary, for arrangements that would assure a smooth transition of power in case of Miklós Horthy's death. The immediate roots of István Horthy's election Péntek finds mainly in the regent's illness in the autumn of 1941. This created fears, both in Horthy and those around him, that his incapacity or death might be used by Hungary's radical right to grab power. To Horthy and his associates, the best man for succeeding him was István Horthy. His "credentials for the post, they maintained, were undisputable: he was a man of absolute integrity and unmistakably an Anglophile; his person would be a bulwark against the far right, and against the growing German pressure. A further consideration in István Horthy's favour was that the Regent was the only person in the country who enjoyed the nation's unqualified esteem; this esteem would be perpetuated in his son."

Regarding the question of possible ulterior motives for István Horthy's election as deputy regent, that is, the paving of the way for the establishment of a "Horthy dynasty," Péntek gives no categorial answer. She concludes: "It seems that Horthy was not the one to originate the notion... but once the idea of electing his son as vice-regent came up, he did not discourage it."

In the rest of this comprehensive study, Péntek examines the process that led to István Horthy's election, noting the attitudes of the various elements of Hungary's body politic to the issue, the national debate about it, as well as domestic and international reactions to the election once it had taken place.

In the following article veteran commentator on wartime Hungarian affairs, Pál Pritz, examines Miklós Horthy's — and Hungary's — relations with the Germans during and immediately after mid-March of 1944, when the Nazis occupied Hungary and Edmund Veesenmayer became Hitler's personal representative there. Pritz offers some glimpses of Horthy's statesmanship in this very difficult period of his political career, when he had to start sharing power with a foreigner, "commissioner plenipotentiary" Veesenmayer. At this juncture Horthy had to use, more than perhaps ever before, his political skills and wisdom — and Pritz credits Horthy with more of these than do some other historians — to start managing the affairs of his nation under increasingly trying circumstances.

Most of the limitations on Horthy's ability to act after March 19, 1944, are familiar to everyone. The most obvious of these was the fact of German occupation which, though not complete — the *Wehrmacht* did not occupy all regions of the country — was effective. But another of the factors limiting Horthy's influence has not been emphasized before in this introductory essay, yet it ought to be mentioned. In any case, Dr. Pritz — quite correctly — considers it important:

> Horthy's capacity for decision-making was increasingly impeded by his age. He had completed his 75th year at the time and given his eventful course of life, he had long deserved some relaxation and rest. Under normal conditions, Horthy could certainly have been able to perform all the duties incumbent on a head of state. However, under the actual circumstances, ominous as they were, Horthy ought to have had not only a greater talent for statesmanship, but also the energy of his younger days.

This seventy-five-year-old man, constantly under threat of further actions against him and his nation by the occupying power, had to start facing the energetic, young (Veesenmayer was 40), and fairly knowledgeable German "commissioner" for Hungary, who had the backing of his powerful masters in Berlin. The beginning of this uneven relationship constitutes — along with other topics such as the background to the German occupation of Hungary — the subject of Pritz's article. Its postscript-like conclusions are worth quoting:

After the German occupation of March 19, 1944, the fates of Miklós Horthy and Edmund Veesenmayer became intertwined for a few months. Those months, however, were decisive, fateful ones. The respective roles of these two men came to an end after the abortive Hungarian attempt at getting out of war in mid-October. From that time on, their lives took different courses. Horthy faced incarceration in a German concentration camp which was followed after the end of the war by permanent exile from his homeland. In the meantime, in the months after October 15th, Veesenmayer undoubtedly worked even more effectively than before; in fact, the German official's career reached its zenith in that particular period.

The third article is a documentary study aimed at shedding additional light on the ideas and experiences of Veesenmayer and his attitudes to the Hungary of 1944 and her leader. Its focus is an American intelligence document, more precisely, a written deposition that Veesenmayer made with American military intelligence officers soon after the war's end. This is followed by another documentary article which presents letters written by Horthy, who was in American captivity at the time, to U.S. President Harry Truman in May of 1945, and to British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin in April of 1946. These letters had no impact on the evolution of Hungary or probably not even on the subsequent treatment of Horthy; Sakmyster suspects that they were probably not even read by the people they had been addressed to. The letters' contents suggest how little Horthy's views of international politics and Hungary's role in them had changed over the previous two decades. They also indicate how much Horthy was out of touch with political attitudes at the time in the West.

These articles are followed by the already-mentioned review of Professor Sakmyster's political biography of Horthy.

* * *

It is hoped that the articles and documents in this volume will add to the knowledge that we have of Regent Miklós Horthy, his son István, and the controversies that have surrounded them particularly concerning the era of the Second World War. It is not expected however that the appearance of this special issue will reduce controversies much. The name Miklós Horthy will long continue to stir up emotions in Hungarians as well as non-Hungarians. Indicative of this is the animated debate that accompanied Horthy's reburial in his native Kenderes in September of 1993. Although transferring his earthly remains from the British cemetery in Lisbon, Portugal, to the one in Kenderes was only the implementation of Horthy's deathbed wish, there was an outpouring of opposition to the idea both inside and outside Hungary. Participants in the debate over the reburial even included people who had never lived under

Horthy.[24] There can be little doubt that Horthy will remain a controversial figure in Hungarian history, as well as Hungarian historiography, for years to come.

NOTES

[1]A.J.P. Taylor, in *Eduard Benes: Essays and Reflections,* J. Opocensky ed. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1944), p. 164.

[2]A massive two-volume history of Hungary was completed in 1964 under the direction of the country's more prominent historians. It assigns Horthy the lion's share of responsibility for involvement in Hitler's campaigns against Yugoslavia and the U.S.S.R. See volume 2 of *Magyarország története* [Hungary's History], Erik Molnár, Ervin Palményi, and György Székely, eds. (Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1964), pp. 435-37. Among the authors of this volume were I.T. Berend, Péter Hanák, György Ránki. One could cite the similar views of other noted historians in Hungary of the 1960s, as for example those of Magda Ádám and Gyula Juhász. See Ádám's paper, "From the History of Hungarian-Czechoslovak Relations on the Eve of the Second World War" (in Russian), in *Voprosy Istorii,* 1960, p. 91; and Juhász's *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája, 1939-1941* [The Foreign Policies of the Teleki Government, 1939-1941] (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1964), p. 11.

[3]See, for example, A.T. Pushkash, *Vengriia vo Vtoroi Mirovoi Voine* [Hungary in the Second World War] (Moscow: Institute for International Affairs, 1963). Pushkash, in particular, was very critical of C.A. Macartney's interpretation of Hungarian wartime history and called him "an apologist of the Horthy regime," pp. 9f.

[4]John F. Montgomery, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1947), re-printed by Vista Books, Morristown, NJ, 1993.

[5]C.A. Macartney, *Hungary: A Short History* (Chicago: Aldine, 1962), p. 226.

[6]Macartney's study appeared in the U.K., in Edinburgh (Edinburgh University Press, 1957, 2nd edition, 1961, 2 vols). It was also published in the United States as *A History of Hungary, 1929-1944* (New York: Praeger, 1957), 2 vols. Similar views were expressed in C.A. Macartney and A.W. Palmer, *Independent Eastern Europe: A History* (London: Macmillan, 1962).

[7]Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 173 and 180f.

[8]Mario Fenyo, *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary: German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

[9]N.F. Dreisziger, *Hungary's Way to World War II* (Toronto: Hungarian Helicon Society, 1968). This work was based on a research paper produced in fulfilment of the requirements of the Diploma in Russian and East European Studies at the newly established Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) at the University of Toronto.

[10]Peter Gosztony, *Miklós von Horthy: Admiral und Reichsverweser* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1973).

[11]Péter Gosztonyi, *A kormányzó, Horthy Miklós* [The Regent, Miklós Horthy] (Budapest: Téka, 1990).

[12]Horthy's years of exile receive more detailed treatment in Gosztonyi's *A kormányzó Horthy Miklós és az emigráció* [Regent M.H. and the Émigrés] (Budapest: Százszorszép Kiadó, 1992).

[13]In Paul Bődy, ed., *Hungarian Statesmen of Destiny, 1860-1960* (Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1989). Social Sciences Monograph series (Boulder, CO). Distributed by Columbia University Press.

[14]To the knowledge of this writer, no review of the book has appeared in the *American Historical Review.*

[15]István Deák, "Admiral and Regent Miklós Horthy: Some Thoughts on a Controversial Statesman," *The Hungarian Quarterly*, vol. XXXVII, no. 143 (Autumn 1996), pp. 78-89.

[16]Deák also finds the book "enjoyable reading." *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[17]*Ibid.*

[18]*Ibid.* p. 89.

[19]Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral,* p. 400.

[20]For the most recent of such treatments see *ibid.*, pp. 279-281 and 289-290. These pages deal with the events surrounding István Horthy's election as vice-regent and his death respectively.

[21]Deák, "Admiral and Regent," p. 89, n. 5.

[22]Mrs. István Horthy, compiler, *Horthy István repülő főhadnagy tragikus halála* [The Tragic Death of Fight Lieutenant István Horthy] (Budapest: Auktor könyvkiadó, 1992). The translation of Hungarian military ranks into English is difficult as the designation of ranks varies from time to time, and among Great Britain, the United States, and Canada.

[23]Mrs. István Horthy, "Amit el kell mondani" [What must be told], an introduction to her above-mentioned volume, pp. 10f.

[24]As pointed out by Deák, "Admiral and Regent," pp. 78f.

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István Horthy's Election as Vice-Regent in 1942

Rita Péntek

When Vice-Admiral Miklós Horthy was elected regent of the Kingdom of Hungary by that country's National Assembly on March 1, 1920, no one envisaged a regency that would endure for nearly twenty-five years. Act I of 1920 regulated the powers of the regent;[1] it did not, however, touch on the question of who would fill the empty Hungarian throne. The expectation was that the Entente's unequivocal opposition notwithstanding, Charles IV of the House of Habsburg, would, in time, be restored. The powers vested in the regent by the National Assembly were strictly circumscribed and resembled more those of a weak president than those of a constitutional monarch.

The Regent, however, was voted wider powers that very year.[2] Over the years, a number of bills would be introduced with the dual aim of giving Horthy further powers still, and of settling the issue of succession. The real reason why all this was so important was never specified.[3]

Horthy himself wanted to solve the question of succession by nominating two or three candidates for the regency in his political testament. In 1937, he called on the government to work out a bill providing for this contingency.[4]

The first draft of the bill on succession stipulated that Parliament (the bicameral system had been restored in Hungary in 1926) vote on the Regent's nominees in an open ballot. Legally, thus, Parliament was free to contravene Horthy's will; within the given political constellation, however, the open ballot provision was tantamount to curtailing the Parliament's authority, as the liberal Károly Rassay, president of the Civil Liberty Party (Polgári Szabadságpárt), pointed out in the House of Representatives.[5]

The politically well-informed claimed to know for a fact that the sole purpose of the new bill was to allow the Regent to name his own son to be his successor. The assumption was borne out by the circumstance that Act XXII of 1926 already contained provisions for the election of the new regent in case of Horthy's incapacity or death. The new bill seemed to be superfluous and unwarranted, and Rassay was not the only one to say so. In the face of this resistance, in mid-June, Horthy revoked his permission for Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi to present the bill in the Lower House.[6]

A few weeks later, the Prime Minister presented a revised version of the bill, one that spoke only of the Regent's right to make recommendations as to the person of his successor. The Social Democrats and the liberal democratic National Kossuth Party (Országos Kossuth Párt) rejected even this proposal, arguing that a new franchise bill — one that would abolish the restrictions on the franchise and introduce the secret ballot nation wide — should have been given priority. They also wanted to see limitations placed on the Regent's tenure in office. The far-rightist Popular Will Party (Népakarat Párt) likewise opposed the bill on the grounds that passing it would do away with the temporary nature of the regency.

The Civil Liberty Party, on the other hand, endorsed the bill as one which gave the Regent no more than the right to *recommend* a successor. As such, it had propitiously reconciled the nation's esteem for the Regent with securing the expression of the nation's sovereign will through Parliament. The Smallholders' Party (Országos Kisgazdapárt) also supported the bill, as did Sándor Ernszt, a conservative Catholic delegate, who praised it as a measure which, by perpetuating the interregnum, served to uphold the monarchy, that "natural deterrent" to "the vogue of dictatorship."[7]

The law that was passed allowed the Regent to name three nominees to succeed him. Both houses of Parliament sitting together had then to vote in a secret ballot on whether or not they wished to consider also candidates other than those nominated by Horthy. If not, they were to choose one of Horthy's nominees in a secret ballot. At least three-fifths of the members of both houses had to be present for the election of the new regent to be valid. A National Council was to function as head of state until the new regent was sworn in.[8] By the terms of the succession bill passed in 1937, thus, the Regent's nomination carried at most a moral weight, for Parliament was free to veto his nominees, and elect its own candidate instead. The bill, however, made no provisions for a proxy should the Regent be incapacitated by illness or in any other way.

In keeping with the provisions of the bill, Horthy nominated three ex-prime ministers as his possible successors: Kálmán Darányi, Count Gyula Károlyi, Sr., and Count István Bethlen. By 1941, however, Darányi was dead; the other two nominees were practically the same age as Horthy, who turned seventy-three that year.[9]

In autumn of 1941, Horthy was taken seriously ill. In a letter written to Prime Minister László Bárdossy in late November, he urged that the matter of succession be conclusively settled in his lifetime. Act XIX of 1937, he maintained, did not really solve the problem; what was needed was a law that did away with the interregnum between the death of one regent and the swearing in of his successor. He also took the opportunity to criticize the bill on the grounds that his own recommendations were of no real consequence. He asked that Parliament choose a vice-regent who would automatically succeed to the regency in the event of his resignation. He did not, however, wish to nominate anyone for the post of vice-regent.[10]

Horthy's concern appeared justified. There could be no doubt that the far right would be the first to take advantage of the Regent's incapacity or sudden death, and install its own candidate as regent. Chances were that the Germans, too, would have used their influence to this effect.[11]

As General Gyula Kádár recalled it, the notion that István Horthy, the Regent's elder son, be elected vice-regent was first formulated at the home of Béla Somogyi, a member of the Upper House.[12] István Horthy, for his part, turned down the suggestion point-blank.[13] The far-rightist ex-prime minister, Béla Imrédy, the head of the Party of Hungarian Revival (Magyar Megújulás Pártja), immediately found a willing "alternative," the Habsburg Archduke Albrecht, a man of overweening ambition and, as an adult male member of the House of Habsburg, automatically a member of the Upper House of Hungary's Parliament.

The idea of instituting the vice-regency and getting István Horthy to fill the position had been broached by Horthy's immediate circle as early as 1939-40. Making the regency hereditary, so the argument went, would dispense with all the turmoil that electing a new regent would involve; it was a way of guaranteeing political continuity and stability. During the Regent's lifetime, the vice-regent would have "the role of a counsellor with no authority and no responsibilities." István Horthy's credentials for the post, they maintained, were undisputable: he was a man of absolute integrity and unmistakably an Anglophile; his person would be a bulwark against the far right, and against the growing German pressure. A further consideration in István Horthy's favour was that the Regent was the only person in the country who enjoyed the nation's unqualified esteem; this esteem would be perpetuated in his son. Finally, István Horthy's election as vice-regent would be a significant step toward the establishment of the Horthy dynasty.[14]

Did Horthy really have dynastic ambitions? An unequivocal answer is hard to come by, given the paucity and contradictory nature of the available sources. What we do know for sure is that Horthy, in his letter to Bárdossy, asked that the vice-regent (whose name he did not specify) be invested with the right of succession. Obviously, he welcomed the idea that his son should be his proxy, for he was a man with whom he could cooperate unreservedly. As Horthy tells it in his memoirs, he did not want to be accused of nepotism; on the other hand, he could not be indifferent to his son's "personal future".[15] The Prince Primate, Jusztinián Serédi, recalled him saying: "Everyone who has a house wants his son to inherit it when he dies;... that's how he is with the regency, which he wants his son to inherit".[16] Mrs. István Horthy, the Regent's daughter-in-law, was of a very different opinion. Unlike Serédi, she believed that Horthy wanted to see a vice-regent elected because of his own advanced age. István Horthy's antipathy to the Nazis, his foreign contacts, and the fact that he was Horthy's own son made him the most attractive choice, for he was someone whom the Regent could trust implicitly. Mrs. István Horthy expressly made a point of the fact that the family never entertained the notion of founding

a dynasty.[17] To answer our own question: It seems that Horthy was not the one to originate the notion of founding a dynasty, but once the idea of electing his son as vice-regent came up, he did not discourage it.

There was no doubt in Bárdossy's mind that Parliament would never consent to automatic succession for the vice-regent, given that one would be elected at all. Several of Horthy's own advisers — István Bethlen, for one — were also against the proposal.[18] The Roman Catholic Church also opposed it,[19] as did the liberal opposition, and many members of the Party of Hungarian Life (Magyar Élet Pártja), the government party. The most vehement opposition came from the far right.

On the matter of the vice-regency as such, the parties were pretty well divided. Béla Imrédy and the far right backed Archduke Albrecht, a political extremist unlikely to have been a good choice. Nor would the British and French governments have approved of the election of a Habsburg. Much to his surprise, Albrecht got no support from Germany either; Hitler simply refused to receive him. Imrédy and his party, however, started campaigning for him in December of 1941. Imrédy had his own personal reason for wanting to thwart whatever plans Horthy might have had for his son: he never did forgive the Regent for dismissing him from the prime minister's post in 1939.

The Archduke took particular pains to win the backing of the Arrow-Cross Party (Nyilaskeresztes Párt).[20] Ferenc Szálasi, the party's leader, had decided against supporting him in the summer of 1941 already, and declared: "Sz. [Szálasi] has always known and shall always know who his head of state is." On the other hand, Jenő Ruszkay — whom Szálasi would later expel from the party — supported Albrecht from the start, and consulted on a number of occasions with Béla Imrédy, the pro-German General Jenő Rátz, and the Germans. Though he could not get Szálasi and the party to endorse Albrecht, Ruszkay wanted them to at least start a campaign of defamation against István Horthy. Szálasi, however, was unwilling to go even this far, hoping to win Horthy's favour by backing his son. He sent Gábor Vajna to try to set up a meeting with István Horthy, who, however, would have nothing to do with him. At this point, Szálasi made a complete volte-face; the party was free to engage in a campaign of defamation against István Horthy.[21] Fliers flooded the cities castigating him as "a thoroughly debased drunkard and an immoral, degenerate womanizer", "an Anglophile traitor," and "a dandy with Jewish morals, wallowing delirious in the delights of depravity."[22]

The main objective of this campaign, as far as the Arrow-Cross Party was concerned, was to curry favour with Nazi Germany. Hitler, however, opted to stay on good terms with Horthy. The fliers succeeded only in fuelling Horthy's antipathy to Szálasi and his party, and in rallying the Smallholders' and the Social Democrats' parties which otherwise would probably have opposed the establishment of the institution — to support the concept of the vice-regency.[23] Even Imrédy and his faithful denounced the Szálasi party's campaign.

The government party itself was far from united on the question of just who the vice-regent should be. They did not trust Albrecht; but István Horthy was suspect as harbouring dynastic ambitions, and a small group within the government party took exception to his Anglophile leanings.

The Catholic Church — headed by the Prince Primate, Jusztinián Serédi — also had reservations. Serédi and Horthy had started out on the wrong foot in 1927, when the Vatican appointed Serédi Prince Primate, and not the Hungarian government's and Horthy's candidate, Lajos Smrecsányi, Archbishop of Eger. Serédi, as sometimes happens with people who unexpectedly find themselves appointed to positions of power, uncritically followed the Vatican's bidding, and saw Horthy as a Protestant in the first place, and only secondarily as a head of state.[24] Furthermore, Serédi was a legitimist, and feared that István Horthy's election as vice-regent would put an end to the interregnum character of the regency, and an end also to the possibility of a Habsburg restoration. As Serédi saw it, István Horthy was not particularly popular, and the Catholics of the country would have preferred a Catholic vice-regent. Still, if electing István Horthy vice-regent was the price to be paid for domestic peace and non-interference from Germany, he was willing to pay it: for rejecting István Horthy would boil down to a vote of non-confidence for the Regent.[25]

The Reformed (Calvinist) Church, particularly Bishop László Ravasz, supported István Horthy's candidacy wholeheartedly. All the leading Reformed churchmen signed the paper endorsing the Regent's son as vice-regent.

The bill concerning the vice-regency was discussed in principle at a conclave held on January 20, 1942. László Bárdossy, Minister of the Interior Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, Justice Minister László Radocsay, Gyula Károlyi, Móric Eszterházy, and Iván Rakovszky were all who were present. István Bethlen had been invited to attend, but his car broke down on the way to the meeting (not accidentally, chances are); thus, they consulted with him later on. At this closed meeting, the decision was reached to endorse the election of István Horthy as vice-regent, but not *cum jure successionis*.[26]

Prime Minister Bárdossy summarized the final draft of the bill at the cabinet meeting held on January 27. He pointed out that the earlier bills dealing with the powers of the regent did not make adequate provision for the Regent's proxy. It was a matter that needed to be dealt with without delay, particularly since the country was at war. The new bill would be in keeping with Hungarian constitutional practice, for until 1867, the Palatine had functioned as the King's institutional proxy. The institution of the vice-regency would relieve the Regent of the more mundane of his tasks. The cabinet resolved to submit the bill to Parliament after having shown it to the Regent.[27]

The bill on the vice-regency was framed to guarantee that Horthy's own candidate would, in fact, be appointed. It gave him the right to recommend up to three people for the post; if he recommended only one person, Parliament would have to "elect" him. Horthy's recommendation of even one candidate meant that only that one person was in the running, for Parliament could propose

a candidate only if the Regent submitted no candidate of his own. In that case, an endorsement signed by one hundred and fifty MPs qualified one as a candidate for the vice-regency. If there was only one candidate, and he had been endorsed by over two-thirds of the members present at the opening of that particular sitting, no vote was to be taken: he would simply be declared vice-regent by the Speaker.

The government party had a clear majority in the House of Representatives, and had been busy winning outside supporters as well. István Horthy would have no trouble getting the required two-thirds majority. There was also a further safeguard that guaranteed Horthy the last word: the election was valid only if the Regent confirmed the results. The powers of the vice-regent, however, were rather restricted: his appointment could be rescinded at any time, and he would not automatically succeed to the regency. The election of the regent was reserved to Parliament, and the vice-regency was to be terminated by the inauguration of the new regent.

The Prime Minister called an inter-party conference on February 6, which continued on February 9. Bárdossy — aware that there was little popular support for setting up the vice-regency — outlined the bill, and asked the parties' representatives to vote on the bill without a debate, and to treat its passage as a matter of highest priority. Béla Imrédy protested against the haste; in his opinion a constitutional matter of such weight called for careful consideration, and his party definitely wanted to address the issue in the House. He also had doubts as to the need for a vice-regency in the first place: the Regent needed a proxy only in case of unexpected incapacitation (by an illness, for instance); in that case, however, the prime minister could very well take over for him on an interim basis. In Germany, too, Imrédy argued, the head of state and the head of government were one and the same person. Nor did he approve of the vice-regent's being vested with the powers of commander-in-chief; it was hard to see how two people could both exercise supreme command. Andor Jaross, a member of Imrédy's party, agreed: "The nation, at the moment, is not so united in spirit that we could decide an issue of such significance." His reservations were shared by the Arrow-Cross representatives who urged that public opinion be duly considered in debating the vice-regency bill.

Support for the urgent passage of the bill came from the Smallholders and the Civil Liberty Party, whose spokesmen maintained that passing the bill would help to achieve the very unity whose absence Jaross had deplored, and that it would add immeasurably to the citizens' sense of security. The Social Democrats took no stand at this meeting. Bárdossy declared himself ready for further consultation with the various party leaders, but reiterated the need for the bill's urgent passage. It was resolved to continue discussions on February 10.[28] That very day yet, Bárdossy submitted the bill to the House, where it was slated for debate without delay.[29]

The next day, it was agreed that only the Party of Hungarian Revival and the Arrow-Cross Party would address the House apropos the bill, with one

speaker each. The bourgeois opposition parties and the Social Democrats had decided to support the bill. It was a demonstrative stand against the German threat, and for the sovereignty of Hungary.[30] Horthy and his "conservative liberals" were still a deal better, from the Social Democrats' point of view, than the far right, and could do with their support. There would be time enough after the war, once the far right was eliminated, to join with the Smallholders and the democratic liberals to topple the system as a whole.[31]

The parliamentary debate on the vice-regency bill took place on February 10, after the inter-party conference. As soon as the bill had been presented, Béla Imrédy asked to speak; it was his moral obligation to do so, he said. The government, he charged, had presented the parties with a *fait accompli*; the procedure was not exactly what one could call constitutional. In fact, the bill before the House was without constitutional precedent, not just in Hungarian history,[32] but in the history of other nations as well. As Imrédy saw it, the vice-regency bill was, in effect, the duplication of the regent's powers, though he conceded that as concerned the letter of the law, the bill contained measures aimed at avoiding just this sort of duplication. The Arrow-Cross speaker joined Imrédy in censuring the bill, and castigated István Horthy, who was "no friend" of Germany and, therefor, was unfit for the post of vice-regent. Since no one else rose to speak, the House voted to accept the bill in principle.[33]

Bárdossy replied to the critics at the next sitting of the House, on February 12. He declared that the parties had not been faced with a *fait accompli*; the inter-party conferences had been their opportunity to discuss the bill. Imrédy, he charged, had not kept to the agreement reached at the inter-party conference; his address had destroyed the solemnity of the occasion. The House then voted to pass the bill point by point,[34] but that was still not the end of the debate as far as Imrédy and his party were concerned. Andor Jaross read out his statement, and decried the fact that it had only appeared in the National Socialist papers, though he had asked for an objective press coverage at the inter-party conference. Imrédy rose to take exception to the "personal insult" he had suffered from Bárdossy, and there followed a heated verbal altercation between them. Bárdossy concluded by noting that the government would see to it that the speeches of the Hungarian Revival and the Arrow-Cross Party spokesmen would be reported objectively in the press.[35]

The Upper House discussed the bill on February 14, and passed it both in principle and in points of detail. Horthy's rescript renouncing his right of nomination in favour of Parliament was read to the House of Representatives at its February 16 sitting.[36] Ostensibly, the move was motivated by his respect for the sovereignty of the Parliament; in fact, he did not want to nominate his son himself.

István Horthy was elected Vice-Regent on February 19, at a joint sitting of Parliament, with two hundred and eighty members of the House of Representatives and two hundred and three members of the Upper House present. Two-thirds of them gave István Horthy their written endorsement. Archduke Albrecht

and other members of the House of Habsburg, Imrédy and his party, and most of the Arrow-Cross representatives were demonstratively absent.

The session was opened by Bertalan Széchenyi, the Speaker of the Upper House, who proclaimed that the Regent had renounced his right of nomination, and that Parliament was free to name its own nominees. At that point István Kölcsey called out: "Long live István Horthy!"[37] The assembled resolved to forego the balloting procedure, and the Speaker declared that István Horthy had been elected Vice-Regent by acclamation. The election was confirmed by the Regent, and István Horthy was sworn in.

The following day the Arrow-Cross Party resumed its campaign against István Horthy. The far rightist *Pesti Újság* had a picture of the Vice-Regent, and under it the caption "Not welcome", the abbreviated form of "Jewish advertisement not welcome", a notice regularly published in the paper.[38] The message was unmistakable, but there were no real repercussions; the paper's license was suspended only for two weeks. But the Vice-Regent's election also led to a rift within the Arrow-Cross Party: Szálasi expelled Ruszkay and Kálmán Hubay, and all the representatives who had attended the joint session at which the Vice-Regent had been elected.[39]

The *Nemzetőr* (Guardian of the Nation), the official paper of the Party of Hungarian Revival, reported on the election without much enthusiasm.[40] In a letter dated February 20, the party's own "favorite", Archduke Albrecht, told Horthy that he thoroughly disapproved of his son's election.

The other parties swallowed whatever reservations they might have had, and accepted István Horthy as Vice-Regent.

The *Kis Újság* (Little Paper), the *Népszava* (The People's Word), the *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), the *Esti Kurir* (Evening Courier), the *Függetlenség* (Independence), and the *Pesti Hírlap* (Journal of Pest) all expressed their high esteem of the Vice-Regent. The *Népszava* and the *Esti Kurir* emphasized that Horthy was a mechanical engineer, and as such, had worked alongside the working class; he knew their problems, and was sensitive to their needs. He was also a fine soldier, something particularly important for a deputy head of state in times of war.[41] The *Függetlenség* expressed its hope that the "glorious edifice" begun by the Father would be continued and brought to "glorious completion" by the Son.[42] There was no question that István Horthy was seen as the future Regent. The *Magyar Nemzet* published a list of those who had endorsed István Horthy's election. Ferenc Chorin and Sámuel Goldberger, the two Jewish members of the Upper House, however, were left out, as were some of the major opposition politicians: Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Károly Rassay, Zoltán Tildy, and István Vásáry. It could hardly have been a coincidence.[43]

There was no great enthusiasm for the new Vice-Regent among the military. General Ferenc Szombathelyi, who had been appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on István Horthy's recommendation, supported him, obviously; but most of the officer corps was indifferent. The rightists among

them were wont to be of the same mind as Imrédy and the Arrow-Cross.[44] One of the reasons István Horthy would have to go to the front was to win the respect of the army.

The Axis powers reacted to the Vice-Regent's election pretty much as could be expected. The German press simply reported the event with cool detachment. Andor Hencke, the member of the German Foreign Ministry's political department stationed in Budapest, wrote two reports on István Horthy on February 21. He emphasized that everyone, save for "the Jews and the aristocrats," was upset with young Horthy's election, for he was known to be an Anglophile. As Dietrich Jagow, Germany's ambassador to Budapest, reported to the German Foreign Ministry, Horthy's former English contacts were good reason to suppose that he still sympathized with the British. At the same time, he was sure that as a responsible Hungarian statesman, István Horthy would back the Bárdossy government's Germanophile policies.[45]

Though there was no official German reaction, Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda, reflected candidly on István Horthy in his diary. The Hungarian Regent's elder son was a "Jew-lover," an Anglophile to the bone, uncultured and politically ignorant; in short, he was a man the Nazis would have trouble with, if ever he succeeded to the regency. Wartime, however, was not the time to deal with matters of this sort; they'd have to make the best even of a Vice-Regent so little to their liking, and put off any action that might need to be taken until after the war.[46]

The Italian press reported on the Vice-Regent's election in a much more favourable light. It pointed out that Hungarians had always set great store by tradition and continuity. They could hardly have found a better man than István Horthy, who was a modern man to his fingertips.[47] Count Ciano's diary, on the other hand, paints a less enthusiastic picture. István Horthy, Ciano wrote, was totally unsuited to the role of Vice-Regent. But in electing him, the Italian Foreign Minister noted, Hungary was taking an anti-German stand of sorts.[48]

The Allies did not attach any particular importance to the event. Great Britain considered itself at war with Hungary since December of 1941, and *The Times* carried only a brief article on the election.[49]

Shortly after he was elected Vice-Regent, István Horthy, a Lieutenant in the Hungarian Air Force, asked to be sent to the Russian front. He wanted to get some first-hand experience of the situation there. He hoped that as Vice-Regent, he might be in the position to influence an eventual armistice or peace treaty, and did not want to lay himself open to the charge of having had no experience of military affairs.[50] He died in action on August 20 when his plane crashed near Aleksejevo-Lozovskoje. His hopes — and the hopes attached to him — died with him.

NOTES

[1]*Magyar Törvénytár* [Hungarian Law Archive], hereafter: *MTT*, 1920. évi törvénycikkek (Laws passed in 1920), 1920: I. törvénycikk (Act I of 1920), Gyula Térfy, ed. (Budapest, 1921), pp. 3-13.

[2]*Ibid.*, 1920: XVII. törvénycikk (Act XVII of 1920), p. 61.

[3]The Papers of Károly Rassay, p. 24. Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives), hereafter: MOL, R 313, Személyek szerinti iratok, (Documents by name), bundle 6.

[4]*Horthy Miklós titkos iratai* [M.H.'s Secret Papers], Miklós Szinai and László Szűcs, eds. (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1962), pp. 168-170. Also, the Rassay Papers, pp. 24-28.

[5]Elek Karsai, *A budai Sándor palotában történt 1919-1941* [It Happened at the Alexander Palace in Buda 1919-1941] (Budapest: Táncsics, 1963), pp. 288-291.

[6]*Horthy Miklós titkos iratai*, p. 169.

[7]Különböző bizottságok tárgyalásai a Ház elé került egyes törvényjavaslatokról, (Committee debates on the bills submitted to the House), vol. 13, 1934-1937, pp. 265-336. MOL Filmtár (Microfilm Archive of the Hungarian National Archives), box 4447.

[8]*MTT, 1937. évi törvények* (Laws passed in 1937), 1937: XIX. törvénycikk (Act XIX of 1937), pp. 161-169.

[9]C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Publications, 1964) 2. vols, vol. 2, p. 74.

[10]*Horthy Miklós titkos iratai*, p. 309.

[11]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933-1944* [The Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German Diplomatic Papers on Hungary 1933-1944], György Ránki, Ervin Pamlényi, Lóránt Tilkovszky, and Gyula Juhász, eds. (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1967), p. 641.

[12]At the time, István Horthy (1904-1942) was President of the Hungarian National Railways.

[13]Gyula Kádár, *A Ludovikától Sopronkőhidáig* [From Ludovika to Sopronkőhida] (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1978), second ed., vol. 2, p. 410.

[14]Feljegyzések, emlékiratok a kormányzóhelyettesi intézményről [Notes, memorandae dealing with the vice-regency] MOL Filmtár, Box 8930, 2nd title, I.A. 10.

[15]Miklós Horthy, *Emlékirataim* [Memoirs] (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1990), pp. 259-260.

[16]*Serédi Jusztinián hercegprímás feljegyzései 1941-1944* [The notes of Prince Primate J.S. for the Years 1941-1944], Sándor Orbán and István Vida, eds. (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1990), (hereafter: *Serédi*), p. 55.

[17]Ilona Bowden, Mrs. István Horthy, "Hite rendíthetetlen volt hazájában" [He Believed in His Country Unwaverlingly], *Magyar Nemzet*, Sept. 2, 1993, p. 12. and Mrs. István Horthy's letter of Jan. 26, 1996 to the author.

[18]The Rassay Papers, pp. 15 and 23.

[19]*Serédi*, p. 56.

[20]Hans Georg Lehmann, *Der Reichsverweserstellvertreter, Horthys gescheiterte Planung einer Dynastie* (Mainz, 1975), pp. 19-20.

[21]*Szálasi naplója* [Szálasi's Diary], *A nyilasmozgalom a II. világháború idején* [The Arrow-Cross Movement during the Second World War], compiled and commented on by Elek Karsai (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978), pp. 68-81.

[22]In Dezső Saly, *Szigorúan bizalmas!* [Strictly Confidential], *Fekete könyv: 1939-1944* [Black Book: 1939-1944] (Budapest: Anonymus Kiadó, 1945), pp. 478-485.

[23]Miklós László, *Nyilasok, nemzetiszocialisták 1935-1944* [Arrow-Cross Men and National Socialists 1935-1944] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1966), p. 277.

[24]György Barcza, *Diplomataemlékeim 1911-1945*, [Recollections of My Years as a Diplomat 1911-1945] (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1994), vol. 1, p. 293.

[25]*Serédi*, pp. 56-57.

[26]Saly, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

[27]Minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyv (Minutes of the Cabinet Sessions), Box 235, Jan. 27, 1942, pp. 66-74. MOL, K 27.

[28]MOL Filmtár, Box 4453, 23rd title, Vol. 23, 1941-1942, pp. 135-189.

[29]*Képviselőházi napló* [Minutes of the House of Representatives], hereafter: *KN*, 1939-1944, vol. 13, (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1942), Feb. 9, 1942, pp. 41-42.

[30]Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *Liberális pártmozgalmak 1931-1945* [Liberal Movements 1931-1945] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), pp. 148-149.

[31]Péter Sipos, "A szociáldemokrácia 1919 és 1944 között" [Social Democracy between 1919 and 1944], in *Társadalmi Szemle*, 1991/2, 26-30.

[32]Imrédy was mistaken. When János Hunyadi, Regent from 1446 to 1453, was out of the country, he did have an official, Diet-delegatet proxy, Miklós Ujlaki, Voivode of Transylvania.

[33]*KN*, 1942. február 10-i ülés (the Feb. 10, 1942 session) pp. 43-44.

[34]*MTT*, 1942. évi törvények (Laws passed in 1942), Act II of 1942, pp. 34-39.

[35]*KN*, 1942. február 12-i ülés (Feb. 12, 1942 session), p. 60.

[36]*KN*, 1942. február 16-i ülés (Feb. 16, 1942 session), p. 69.

[37]*KN*, 1942. február 19-i ülés (Feb. 19, 1942 session), p. 73.

[38]*Pesti Újság*, Feb. 20, 1942.

[39]*Magyar Nemzet*, Feb. 25, 1942.

[40]*Nemzetőr*, Feb. 13-20, 1942.

[41]*Népszava*, Feb. 20, 1942 and *Esti Kurir*, Feb. 19, 1942

[42]*Függetlenség*, Feb. 20, 1942.

[43]Lóránt Tilkovszky, *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky. Írások tőle és róla* [Writings by and about B.-Zs.] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1986), p. 91.

[44]Lóránd Dombrády, *A Legfelsőbb Hadúr és hadserege* [The Supreme War Lord and his Army) (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1990), p. 185.

[45]*A németek magyarországi politikája titkos diplomáciai okmányokban 1937-1942* [Germany's Hungarian Policy in the Light of Top-Secret Diplomatic Documents 1937-1942], Elek Bolgár, ed. (Budapest: Szikra Kiadó, 1948), pp. 103-108.

[46]Louis P. Locher, *Goebbels Tagebücher aus dem Jahren 1942-1943* (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1948), pp. 72-73, 96.

[47]*Magyar Nemzet*, Feb. 21, 1942.

[48]*Ciano naplója 1939-1943* [Ciano's Diary 1939-1943), Hugh Gibson, ed. (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1946), p. 420.

[49]*The Times*, Feb. 20, 1942.

[50]Bokor Péter, "Történelem felülnézetből. Portugáliai beszélgetés Horthy István özvegyével" [History as Seen from the Top. A Conversation in Portugal with István Horthy's Widow], *Élet és Irodalom March*, 25, 1988, p. 6; and Péter Gosztonyi, *A kormányzó Horthy Miklós és az emigráció* [Regent M.H. and the Émigrés] (Budapest: Százszorszép Kiadó, 1992), p. 122.

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Miklós Horthy and Edmund Veesenmayer: Hungarian-German relations after March 1944

Pál Pritz

However we may approach the problem, one thing remains certain: Miklós Horthy, Regent of Hungary, and Edmund Veesenmayer, commissioner plenipotentiary of the Third *Reich* to Hungary, were the key figures of the Hungarian-German relationship after 19 March 1944. Not that this relationship had been based on equal footing either formally or in its content; it was one in which the Hungarian party's room for manoeuvring became dramatically limited as time passed. Nevertheless, Horthy and Veesenmayer were the main protagonists; therefore, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at these two personalities.

While Miklós Horthy was the head of a state, Veesenmayer was only an agent of another head-of-state, plenipotentiary (invested with the power to make decisions on his own) though. Miklós Horthy's position as head-of-state was greatly limited by many factors. Most serious among them was the presence of the German army in Hungary which, however, abstained from occupying the whole country; thus, for example, the German troops had not penetrated into the region lying east of the Tisza River. They also did not occupy the capital city in a systematic manner, though they did not fail to put the strategically important points of Budapest under their control. Although the Hungarian army was not formally disarmed by the German forces, yet the confinement of Magyar troops to the barracks was humiliating enough in itself. To put up any resistance — no notable effort had been made by the leaders in charge of the Hungarian military to this effect — was out of the question.

Despite its incomplete occupation of Hungary, the German occupying force, however, was fully adequate for the Nazi leaders to achieve their political objectives. For example, when the German efforts to form a new Hungarian government seemed to have met with failure due to Horthy's repeated objections, then — despite the fact that Berlin had started to withdraw some of its occupying forces from Hungary soon after the occupation owing to the deteriorating situation on the fronts — on Veesenmayer's advice the German leaders did not hesitate to intimidate Horthy by threatening to send fresh troops to Hungary.[1]

Horthy was also hamstrung by the internal political circumstances of Hungary. Though before he travelled to Klessheim to meet Hitler, Horthy had vowed that he would not part from his dearest immediate political associates, from Prime Minister Miklós Kállay in the first place, whom he had resolved not to dismiss under any German pressure, yet following the dramatically heated discussions held in the baroque palace near Salzburg, he could not but admit to himself that he would be unable to keep his word. He must have been smitten with strong remorse for his forced perfidy — he who was always so particular about a gentleman's given word.

Horthy was not a statesman in the proper sense of the word, but he was a clever man, because he refused to assume any role which he was — and he knew he was — unsuited for. It was on this account that he had essentially retired from the everyday politics back in the early 1920s, virtually coinciding with the appointment of Count István Bethlen as prime minister in 1921. Over the previous period, almost quarter of a century, he had worked with several prime ministers, with each of whom his personal and working relations had been different, but he was used to one thing, and this probably gave him a great deal of satisfaction, namely that — with the exception of Kálmán Darányi — they were all men of character and stature.

At the time, after the depressingly hard days following the mid-March turn and the nerve-racking negotiations concerning the composition of the would-be government, Horthy simply had to realize that he should rest content with the prime ministerial nomination of Döme Sztójay, the Hungarian ambassador to Berlin, a colourless and ineffective diplomat with a rather sketchy knowledge of the country's internal circumstances. From the country's point of view, he could by no means have expected any better result than that, because it was precisely he who had brought up Sztójay's name as candidate during the negotiations on March 20. Horthy's suggestion may have been motivated by several considerations. Perhaps he may have thought that Sztójay's activity for almost a decade in Berlin, which had been flawless from the Germans' point of view, would curry favour with the Nazis. He may also have considered Sztójay's nomination as an implicit message to "the other side" to make it clear that he was acting under pressure. By choosing a bureaucrat rather than a politician, he may have hoped to extract some "moral capital" for the country. Last but not least, Horthy may have thought of Sztójay's original vocation too; he had been a military officer, and the Regent might have assumed that the ex-soldier, imbued with military spirit and discipline, would obey him more readily than a civilian.

Horthy's capacity for decision-making was increasingly impeded by his age. He had completed his 75th year at the time and given his eventful course of life, he had long deserved some relaxation and rest. Under normal conditions, Horthy could certainly have been able to perform all the duties incumbent on a head-of-state. However, under the actual circumstances, ominous as they were, Horthy ought to have had not only a greater talent for statesmanship, but also the energy of his younger days.

In turning to a discussion of Veesenmayer, what appears at first sight is the fact that this German official — euphemized by his superiors as a diplomat — with his energy, extensive experience, comparatively wide knowledge, and his relatively youthful age (40), had been in the better position of the two from the outset. Reading his numerous reports, it also emerges that Veesenmayer was a clever and sharp-witted man. By 1943 his knowledge of the Hungarian situation — and of Hungarian history in general — had reached a certain stage which, in his view, enabled him to form judgements which appeared (at least to him) to be well-founded and authentic. At the same time, he failed to recognize the countless embarrassing contradictions hidden in the details, but it was these gaps in his knowledge that enabled him to form his opinions very rapidly and not get lost in the details or to let his actions to be slowed down. It should also be added that Veesenmayer was an outright fascist in his political thinking, to the extent that the idea of the superiority of the German nation over other peoples came quite natural to him. Being convinced of his own intellectual superiority as well, he also tended to select the available information in a way as to prove what he had conceived beforehand.

This is well shown by his voluminous report, prepared in December 1943, in which he propounded his opinion both of Hungarian history and of the concrete situation at the time.[2] As it appears from this document, Veesenmayer could form nothing but a disparaging opinion of anything that was Hungarian. In his judgment, since the defeat of the Hungarians by the Turks at Mohács in 1526,[3] Hungary "has never had the necessary popular strength and revolutionary swing to fight its way to the status of a fully independent state. Therefore," he went on, "the Rákóczy-led revolution of 1703-1711 was essentially a revolt, rather than a real revolution."[4] With his deep-seated feeling of the German superiority, he even went so far as to stain the memory of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-1849. "The participation of Hungary in the events of 1848-1849 was made possible only by Vienna that had showed the way."[5] Nor did he refrain from twisting the real meaning of the Kossuth-song,[6] claiming that the whole tragedy and the basically passive demeanour of Hungary and the Hungarians were implicitly expressed by this song. Because — he suggested — Kossuth himself had to send his message twice to achieve some result: "if he sends his this message once more, we all have to go [to war] ..."[7] Apparently, Veesenmayer did not draw on his own original sources when he listed the "facts" which he held to be suitable to dispute the historical accomplishments of Hungarians. Those alleged "facts" and various statements had been — and would be — so often formulated before and after him. Not knowing anything of the formation process of national identity, these views tended to attach an exaggerated significance to the mere facts of ethnic origin. Adopting these views, it was easy for Veesenmayer to enter into such explanations as "the Hungarian national anthem was composed by Erkel, a native of Cologne, almost all buildings of Budapest, including the bridges, were constructed by Germans. The most famous Hungarian painter [M. Munkácsy]

was also a German (Bavarian by origin), while [Hungary's] most outstanding poets were Slovaks." Giving credence to the propaganda slogans and false rumours spread by the Hungarian Nazi Arrow-Cross Men, Veesenmayer wrote that "until 1925, the Regent himself spoke only a somewhat halting Hungarian..., even now, when his temper runs away with him, he will speak German much sooner than Hungarian."[8]

Having formed such an image of Hungarians in general, Veesenmayer did not give better grades to the national resistance either. In his view, "what they (the Hungarians) call 'national resistance' is in fact a passive resistance to everyone, last but not least, to themselves." On the other hand, he termed the passive resistance as a resistance without risk, which the Hungarians tend to "cover with highfalutin words, taking maximum advantage of the higher capacity and better endowments of other ethnic elements." Completely ignoring the Hungarian war losses, especially the casualties of battles near Voronezh and generally the country's economic efforts during the war, Veesenmayer came to the summary conclusion that Hungary "cannot stand the tests" of the burdens of war. What he regarded as a "basic trait" of Hungarians was fear ("to say nothing of cowardice" — he wrote in a deliberately affected fashion, trying to make the impression on his readers in Berlin that what he put down in his reports were not some superficial generalizations, but the most precisely formulated statements). In his opinion, fear is a basic trait "which is characteristic of the responsible Hungarian politicians as well as of a good part of the Hungarian civilian masses".[9]

In regards to the Hungarian Jewry, Veesenmayer regarded the whole country — and tried to make it appear — as a great centre of sabotage. "The 1.1 million Jews," he wrote, — generously adding some 300,000 to their actual number — "mean as many saboteurs [of the Axis war effort], and at least the same, if not twice as much, is the number of Hungarians who as henchman of Jews are ready to help them to carry out their ambitious plans aimed at sabotage and espionage, and to camouflage those plans."[10]

After Veesenmayer had disparaged everything Hungarian on the one hand, and had strongly exaggerated Hungarian resistance to the Germans, on the other, it came quite logical to him to call for an energetic and prompt intervention in Hungary. The *Reich* cannot afford "the luxury," he wrote, "of leaving such a sabotage centre intact." After making many superficial and one-dimensional statements and uttering partial truths, however, Veesenmayer came to a conclusion which would be proved right by the subsequent events: "...it would be a constrained, though rewarding political task, if the *Reich* handled and clarified this problem. All the more so as this problem is not a military, but almost exclusively a political one. If the adversary is overcome with fear and cowardice, it will suffice to utter a clear word, a hard demand, supported by a reference to the German divisions and war-planes."[11]

What explains the fact that, after so many erroneous findings and statements, Veesenmayer finally came to a sound conclusion? Presumably, the right answer to this question can be found in the contemporary structure of Hungarian

society and in the country's tragically difficult situation in the foreign policy field. Since the related problems are all widely known, it will suffice here only to refer to the stagnation of social progress in Hungary, to the unsound distribution of land, to the parasitic way of life and anti-innovation attitude of the upper classes, or to the crisis of the middle class, incapable of any renewal. It is misleading to state that it was difficult if not impossible to sustain the country's independence between the contemporary bolshevik Soviet Union and the racist German *Reich*. From the aspect of home affairs, it was not the equal rejection of fascism and bolshevism which caused the main problem. Because the fact is that contemporary Hungarian society showed much less aversion to racism than to bolshevism. On the other hand, in connection with bolshevism, it should also be emphasized that the regime was disinclined to open up not only in the direction of bolshevism, but also in that of anything which had to do with the political left or with the common people in general. Nor was it inclined to accept and adopt anything meritorious from the program of political democratization.

Regarding the foreign policy aspect of the problem, it may well be stated that the contemporary Soviet Union was not a real threat to Hungary. The country's difficulties in the foreign policy field arose from the lingering effects of the antecedents as well as from the consequences of the Trianon Peace Treaty. To substantiate all what he had reported, Veesenmayer thus summarized this problem: "In my opinion, this" — i.e. what he wrote earlier in the document — "will suffice to contain the adversary, because all along its borders Hungary has got not a single friend, but [only]... embittered enemies."[12]

It seems justifiable to suggest that what Veesenmayer first saw in Hungary were basically such phenomena as the lack of social progress, the unsolved social problems, and the absence of moral firmness of the social and political actors. As to the latter, he could often experience it himself, since his Hungarian informers did not refrain from revealing to him practically every secret of Hungarian political life. In addition, this free-flowing information was all interwoven with the informers' endeavours to denounce their own political adversaries or other disfavoured actors of public life. Thus was it that being informed of many — often too many — details, Veesenmayer could follow with close attention the entire public life in Hungary. All this encouraged him even more to accept as indisputable facts all the commonplaces which had formerly been widely disseminated throughout the Old and the New World by the anti-Hungarian propaganda of the Habsburgs, by the leaders of the nationalities living in Hungary, and later by the publicists and ideologists of the Little Entente powers.

This notion of Hungary, however, was not the only one in the *Reich*; it was rivalled by another conception, the beholders of which thought more of the country's military capacity. This was aptly illustrated by the diary notes which Fieldmarshal Baron Maximilien von Weichs had put down for his own use. As

is known, Weichs became the commander-in-chief of the German troops who marched into Hungary on March 19, 1944.[13]

Some ten days before the occupation, having been already charged with the operation, Weichs envisaged two possible solutions to the Hungarian problem. The first — the desired one — would have been political in nature. Weichs, who had immediately linked up this political version with the name of Prime Minister Béla Imrédy, set forth his proposals from a positive and from a negative standpoint. While *Luftwaffe* commander Hermann Göring was for the former, General Cuno H. Fütterer, the German air-attaché to Budapest, was for the latter.

Since in Weichs' conception the political version was definitely tied up with Imrédy's person, neither Göring's, nor Fütterer's view can be interpreted accurately. Namely, it is not clear whether or not Göring's positive answer was prompted by his relatively thorough knowledge of the Hungarian situation, which prompted him to believe that a military solution could be avoided. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that the similarly well-informed Fütterer's negative answer was not meant to reject the political solution, but he only wanted to question the feasibility of a solution which was so strongly bound to Imrédy's person. In this respect Fütterer was right as he was well aware of Regent Horthy's highly unfavourable opinion of Imrédy.

"If this endeavour happens to fail, or *will not take place* at all, then we shall march in and *attempt* to subdue the country by force" — as Weichs worded his opinion of the military version (italics mine - P.P.). It is worthwhile taking a closer look at this wording. The words italicized by me show aptly how intact Weichs believed Hungarian society and policy to be. It also appears that he had serious doubts about the possibility of the — otherwise desired — political solution, but he was also sceptical as to the success of the military version. This scepticism becomes rather manifest in his using the words "we shall... attempt" and by the tone of this wording.

As regards the second, i.e. the military version of Weichs's proposal, he visualised two possibilities:

"a) If the stronger part of the Hungarian army as well as part of the population joined us *as it seems to be presumed in high quarters,*" the operation could be carried out rapidly and without casualties (italics mine — P.P.). Apparently, Weichs handled this possibility with a marked reservation: he seemingly did not attach a high probability to it, and the consideration of this possibility was dictated to him by the strict rules of a logical thinking process, and, of course, by his knowledge of the importance and high priority the "high quarters" were inclined to attach to this scenario. What Weichs covertly thought of the views in "high quarters," emerges from the tone of the above cited passage as well as from the whole context of this diary notes.

Weichs's reservations are explained by what he wrote in connection with the second possibility:

"b) This will not happen so. As I doubt myself the feasibility of a solution of the a) type. In this case, however, we must reckon with the great national pride of the (Hungarian) people." Von Weichs also knew well the wartime performance of Hungarians, along with the limits of their capacity. But is was not this, but the historically deep roots of the Hungarian people's strength that he really wanted to call attention to. Therefore, he immediately added: "... the failure of our troops along the Eastern front line should not mislead us. In other words, we think that we shall get into the same situation with the Hungarians as with the Italians." Weichs believed the traditions of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848-49 to be still alive, and it was these living traditions that he considered as a decisive factor. "They (the Hungarians) will also fight for their country's independence to the very last. We must remember" — he warned himself as he made these notes for himself only — "those uprisings which the then strong Austrians were never able to suppress once and for all."[14]

The rest of the diary convincingly illustrates the sceptical thoughts of the general charged with the military leadership of the occupation:

> We must reckon with a general uprising (in Hungary) following a very short-lived state of shock, in which the Jews and various communist-inspired elements will play a major role. This will be an immense drawback to us, because we shall be forced to suppress the resistance, and later, by the time of the occupation, major forces will have to be engaged for a longer time, which, under the circumstances, is not desirable at all.

Having been stationed in Belgrade until then, Weichs flew to Vienna on March 13 to direct the preparations for the German advance into Hungary. He was annoyed by the rumours leaked out, and by the "gossips whispered throughout Vienna", which spread to such an extent that even the chambermaids in his hotel talked about them. So his uneasiness about what he was afraid might happen could not ease off. Thus, when the die had been cast, he had to act, and in a manner that his actions should be as effective as possible. "If we did not act," he recorded in his diary on March 14, "the surprise effect of our action would be made questionable." He continued to fear the expected successful Hungarian counteractions: "it seems increasingly possible that (the Hungarians) will take counteractions, which we want to avert."[15]

The following day, on March 15, Weichs jotted it down in his diary that rumours about the occupation of Hungary were spreading "like an avalanche." From the time of Horthy's trip to Klessheim, scheduled for March 18, he inferred that "this 'issue' is likely to be settled by political means." Moreover, having received some new information, he came to the conclusion that "the Hungarian issue" was supposed to have been, from the very start, to be settled within the domain of politics. Hence he remarked that "they [the top political leaders] played a double game" with the soldiers. "They kept the whole thing from us, thus pressing us to take the preparations seriously." Weichs was correct again when he assumed that this double game was also meant to soften up the

Hungarians. "First: the great secrecy and camouflage. Secondly: showing only part of the cards to the Hungarians, spreading, at the same time, rumours about their impending occupation. Obviously, this is the way we can bring pressure on the Hungarians. Our marching in Hungary is the last trump in their intimidation. In other words: a repeated use of the Hacha-recipe.[16] At the Führer's headquarters, Horthy will be pressed to reshuffle his government and to give orders to the effect that no resistance [to us] be put up. Accordingly, our action should be prepared so that it could be called off even at the last minute."[17]

It really happened so. After the heated discussions in Klessheim, which were very successful from Hitler's viewpoint, when the Regent's train left to return to Hungary, the Führer cancelled his order for war planes to fly over Budapest, for the occupation of the Buda Castle, and the disarming of the Hungarian army. All this meant that the size of the occupying force could be reduced. The division of German rangers assembled around Belgrade could stay there, the deployment of the armoured division transferred from the Western front became unnecessary, and Hitler could also send back to their bases his special corps originally stationed in Denmark.[18]

Much has been written about the reasons underlying the repeated success of the Hacha-recipe. This solution proved to be even more favourable from Berlin's point of view than had been imagined by the Nazi leadership originally. The fact is that, simultaneously with the "friendly" occupation of Hungary, the Czech-Moravian state ceased to exist: it was transformed into a protectorate in the Third *Reich*. In turn, this development made it possible for exiled Czech leader Eduard Beneš and his entourage to declare an outright resistance to German rule. Thus it came about that occupied Czechoslovakia became an "independent" state as a belligerent party fighting on the side of the anti-fascist Allied Powers. Meanwhile the occupied Czech lands could live their everyday life relatively undisturbed, though their economic capacity was fully utilized to serve the German war machine. Hungary, in turn, could retain so much — and only so much — of its independence as enabled it just to keep the state apparatus together and to be differentiated from the Czech-Moravian Protectorate. However, this entailed almost exclusively negative consequences — at least from the Hungarian point of view. To wit, the anti-fascist powers were not mislead by these developments, were not beguiled by mere appearances. They invariably regarded the Hungary as a satellite of the Germans, the potential of which benefited only the Germans. As Veesenmayer accurately formulated it in his report: "Every Hungarian peasant, worker or soldier whose deployment will ease our burdens, will also add to the Führer's reserves within the *Reich*."[19]

This raises the question of why the Hungarian leaders were so much beguiled by an illusion? Much has been written on this problem as well. Yet hardly any work treated the problem as one deeply seated in the contemporary Hungarian historico-political thought. In this context it is worthwhile recalling a story about a theatrical performance in the *Vígszínház* (a leading theatre in Budapest) in late February 1944. It was the first night of *Aranyszárnyak*

(Golden Wings), a drama by Ferenc Herczeg, the highly popular writer and playwright who at the age of 80 was regarded as the doyen of Hungarian writers. (Besides, this was the last premiere of the author's dramatic works in his life.) Trying hard to galvanize some life into this historical drama were such eminent actors and actresses as Pál Jávor (acting as Imre Thököly), Artúr Somlay (as Emperor Leopold of Habsburg) or Mária Lázár (as Ilona Zrínyi). But even their great talent failed to moderate the bombastic phrases of the drama. This colourless historical play only served to prompt the sociographer Zoltán Szabó, a harsh critic of Herczeg's work, to express his devastating opinion on the drama in the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), passing, at the same time, a severe judgement on the stereotyped view of history held by a part — in fact, the major part — of the Hungarian middle class.[20]

Herczeg's dramatic work was so anachronistic in its spirit that the writer István Örley, who accompanied his mother to the performance, was able to follow the play for only 20 minutes, after which he suddenly left his balcony box and went to the corridor where he could give free vent to his laughter. This premiere was a remarkable social event, everyone who really counted in Hungary at the time was there: the Regent, the Prime Minister, as well as the other members of the government. After the performance, uncomprehending the situation, Prime Minister Kállay asked István Örley why he had left his box. When Örley gave him the unusually frank answer, the astonished Premier expressed his consternation: "How dare you laugh at a historical drama that brings tears to the Prime Minister's eyes?"[21]

This story has been told here only to reveal Kállay's outburst. It seems to be a statement of key importance which casts light upon the view of history which doomed to failure those politicians who — full of good will and true determination — made efforts to steer the country's ship to safer and stiller waters. However, with such obsolete views it was impossible to organize a resistance to the impending German occupation, what they could achieve at best was a mere survival. Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, Minister of the Interior, was unable to achieve even that much. His sense of reality and danger failed him and he did not go into hiding — unlike former Prime Minister István Bethlen. Keresztes-Fischer was aroused from his bed and was arrested by German security men on March 19. His lot was later shared by many others.

Continuity with pre-March 19 days was symbolized by Miklós Horthy alone. This continuity — as has been referred to above in another context — was meaningless under the circumstances, considering that the regime was unable to turn to the political left for support. Horthy and his followers rejected the criticism offered in connection with the "Golden Wings" in the same way Kállay did. Their only response to Örley's critique of Herczeg's play was that the following day Horthy's Cabinet Office cancelled its subscription to the *Magyar Nemzet*.[22]

After Kállay resigned, the Regent could hardly meet the challenges presented to him by the new circumstances. This situation was described by

Veesenmayer in his brusque manner: "Horthy lies beyond measure on the one hand, and is physically incapable of performing his duties on the other. He keeps repeating himself within a few sentences, often contradicts himself, and occasionally his speech fails him."[23]

When the new government had been formed, Horthy retired to the Buda Castle for months.[24] Obviously, he needed some rest, but what was more to the point, he wanted to demonstrate his keeping aloof from the new situation. Though in Klessheim the Germans had promised certain "guarantees" for the country's independence, but their style of negotiating and their persecution of the Hungarian opposition politicians left little doubt as to the real situation. It was also a meaningful sign of the times that when Dietrich von Jagow, who until then had been the German Ambassador to Budapest, informed the Hungarian government of his release from his duty, he did so through the Regent's Cabinet Office, rather than through the Foreign Ministry.[25] With this, von Jagow wanted to stress the fact that the occupation had been much more than a political action. It was generally known at the time that the diplomatic relations of independent states were maintained and managed through the foreign ministries and not through the offices of the heads-of-state.

There were indications that Veesenmayer had modified, to some extent, his opinion formed in December 1943, and began to think more of the potential of the Hungarian passive resistance. Of course, he did so in awareness of the successes of actions which had been taken largely on his initiatives. Barely a week after the occupation, considering the possible future course of the Hungarian army, he held it more practical to lay special emphasis on the spirit of *Kameradschaft* and *Waffenbruderschaft*, i.e. the tactics he thought should be used was not to disarm but to win over the Hungarian forces, because in the reverse case — he wrote:

there is the danger that:

a) the government and the Regent retreat,

b) a unified opposition, ranging from the left to the right, is formed,

c) a passive resistance is developed, in which the Hungarians are highly experienced,

d) it (the resistance) changes into a general strike,

e) while the resistance is not expected to be strong, it will still engage German troops, thus instead of reducing the number of the occupying troops... even more troops would have to be withdrawn from the front.[26]

The marked change in Veesenmayer's former train of thought appears conspicuously in point c), even more so in point d), but in point e) he is noticeably reserved again. Though the commissioner plenipotentiary somewhat moderated the severeness of his judgements, he was disinclined to change his ruthless attitude and his harsh style, in fact, his successes made him even more arrogant in his ways.

In early May Veesenmayer introduced Otto Winkelmann, commander-in-chief of the German police forces in Hungary, and *Gruppenführer* Wilhelm Keppler, his assistant, to Horthy. In his brief report on the 40-minute reception — according to which the conversation was going on exclusively between the Regent and the *Reichs* commissioner — Veesenmayer thus summarized the event: "I did not fail to make proper reply to any point raised, and I supplied him so exact data and information that he (Horthy) finally found it more appropriate to talk about the weather."[27]

Veesenmayer was an outright fascist, but the fascist ideology could not prevent him from looking at things quite rationally. He knew that no preference should be given to ideological expectations in the hard political practice. Therefore, holding sway over the internal affairs of Hungary, he never used his great influence to help to form a major, unified fascist party, in fact, he preferred to incite conflicts among the forces of opposition. Though he would have welcomed Béla Imrédy as prime minister, and made every effort to have him appointed, when he perceived Horthy's strong aversion to Imrédy, and realized that his own efforts to this effect would certainly fail, he tended to play off against each other, rather than unite those political forces which were acceptable from the viewpoint of the Third *Reich.* He regarded this behaviour as the most effective and promising one under the circumstances. Besides, he also took it into consideration that Regent Horthy, however much he might underrate him, still remained a central factor in the country's life whose removal could only lead to a chaos which could hardly be overcome by political means. So what remained to solve the problem was brute force, though it was utterly disadvantageous to the *Reich* being under the greatest military pressure at the time.

Curiously enough, we know it from Veesenmayer himself that Horthy also recognized the essence of these tactics, so much so that in late April he began to make inquiries about the possibility of creating a right-wing and extreme right-wing union, by which he hoped to put some limits on the power of the commissioner plenipotentiary. Veesenmayer, in turn, tended to play off against one another those turning to him for support, and he also abstained from promoting any negotiations aimed at a fusion of those political forces.[28]

Though Veesenmayer was a clever politician from the viewpoint of the Third *Reich*, it was still the actual circumstances of the contemporary Hungarian society that really backed up his political line. The stereotyped, empty and ranting phrases that characterized the historico-political thought at the time have already been referred to in this paper. Reference has also be made to the problem of the regime's inability to come to terms either with the democratic or with the popular opposition; the latter manifested itself, first of all, in the activities of the popular, peasant-oriented writers engaged also in the sociological study of village life. Hungarian society was not really conscious of the existing danger: if it had been, it would not have cherished such illusions as had been expressed by the populist writer László Németh in his speech at the Balatonszárszó Conference of these writers and other progressive intellectuals in 1943,

envisaging the coming end of the war.[29] The missing awareness of danger also manifested itself in the complete lack of resistance to the German occupation. Historiography and historical publicism have often referred to the heroism of Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's solitary act of resistance. Here, however, it seems appropriate to call attention also to the fact that this heroic politician was not arrested in secret, but was carried off quite openly, in full view of a number of bystanders staring in silence in St. John's square. This raises the painful question of what the wounded politician might have felt when, having been seized by the Germans, he hailed aloud an independent Hungary, and his exclamation found no response at all among the onlookers.

Even if this society was not really conscious of the danger, it was conscious of its fears. One of these fears originated in the first appearance of bolshevism in Hungary in 1919, when the short-lived Republic of Councils offered the Hungarian society a good opportunity to gain some experience. In the same way, the memory of the "White Terror" which was born in retaliation to the former, was also still alive in social consciousness. And now, as the front-line was drawing near, the fear of a "red" revenge was also growing.[30] Ultimately, it was again the Germans who benefited from all this, because the state apparatus had long been paralysed by the same fears, and failed to save the nation from the catastrophe, though it was still able to work smoothly when the German interests were concerned. Otherwise it could hardly have been possible to conclude the German-Hungarian economic agreement on June 24 1944, which almost resulted in the complete fleecing of the country of essential supplies and resources.

As regards the Jewish issue, the mechanism of fear worked much in the same way.[31] The three anti-Jewish acts, which had been adopted earlier, continued to undermine the country's social cohesion. At the same time, it forced those responsible for those acts, to keep together and to side with the Germans. Thus it came about that there were many in Hungary who became losers and there were also many who benefited from this situation. The stakes were sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller, but those who benefited the most were undoubtedly the Germans again, otherwise it would had been inconceivable that the tragedy of masses of Jews could ensue within an very short time. In this context, it will suffice to mention that SS leader Adolf Eichman and his small group of "experts" would been reduced to a state in which they would have been incapable of action without the cooperation of the major part of Hungarian bureaucracy and the effective and often brutal assistance of the Hungarian gendarmerie, though in this respect the attitudes and activities of the Jewish Council should not be left unmentioned either.

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After the German occupation of March 19 1944, the fates of Miklós Horthy and Edmund Veesenmayer became intertwined for a few months. Those months,

however, were decisive, fateful ones. The respective roles of these two men came to an end after the abortive Hungarian attempt at getting out of war in mid-October. From that time on, their lives took different courses. Horthy faced incarceration in a German concentration camp which was followed after the end of the war by permanent exile from his homeland. In the meantime, in the months after October 15th, Veesenmayer undoubtedly worked even more effectively than before; in fact, the German official's career reached its zenith in that particular period.

The Hungarian Regent's fate had been spectacularly intertwined with his country's life for a full quarter of a century, but the months between March and October 1944 constituted the most unsuccessful period of his entire political career. The role he and Veesenmayer played in the period discussed in this paper — or, rather, only touched upon in several respects — may be appraised not only from the point of view of effectiveness, but also from that of the consequences. And, considering their efforts in the latter respect, Veesenmayer's activity should be deemed to have been even more negative than it appeared at first glance, because he had helped to prolong the sufferings of not only the Hungarian, but also of the German people.

NOTES

[1]The German occupation of Hungary and its antecedents, as well as the events of months preceding October 15, 1944 are analyzed by György Ránki, *1944. március 19* [March 19, 1944] 2nd. rev. and enlarged edition (Budapest, 1978).

[2]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933-1944* [Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German diplomatic records on Hungary 1933-1944], Comp., ed. and supplied with explanatory notes by György Ránki, Ervin Pamlényi, Lóránt Tilkovszky, and Gyula Juhász (Budapest, 1968), pp. 743-751.

[3]In 1526 the advancing Turkish army, led by Suleiman the Magnificent, inflicted a decisive defeat on the allied Hungarian forces at the battlefield of Mohács. This defeat opened the way to the 150-year Turkish occupation of the southern and central parts of Hungary.

[4]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország,* p. 743.

[5]What would Veesenmayer have said if a Frenchman, following his logic, had considered the events in Vienna as having resulted from the fact that Paris "had showed the way"?

[6]A Hungarian patriotic song dating back to the early 1850s, commemorating the War or Independence of 1848-49, which has been popular and often sung ever since, especially on certain national holidays. Composed after the failure of the war when Kossuth was already in emigration, the passage of the song referred to here expresses the people's hope and desire that Kossuth would return to liberate the country from the Habsburg absolutism, and then he would ask "once more" for "regiments" to help him. The full passage in prose runs like this: "Lajos Kossuth has sent a message: he had run

short of his regiments, if he sends this message once more, we all have to go [to war] ...". So the words "once more" relate to Kossuth's expected return — much hoped-for by the people — to resume the freedom fight.

[7]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország*, p. 744.

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]*Ibid.*

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 745. Characteristically, in this particular context, Veesenmayer forgot about making disparaging comments on the Hungarian passive resistance.

[11]*Ibid.*

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]*Maximilien von Weichs vezértábornagy feljegyzései 1944-ből* [Diary notes of Fieldmarshal Maximilien von Weichs from 1944] in: *Az 1944. év krónikája* [The Chronicle of the year 1944], *História Évkönyv 1984* [The 1984 Yearbook of the periodical *História*], ed. by Ferenc Glatz (Budapest, 1984), pp. 43-44. (These diary notes were found and then published by Peter Gosztonyi in the Hungarian-language Munich journal *Új Látóhatár* [New Horizon] No. 1, 1984; certain details were also published by him in the *História Évkönyv 1984* [The 1984 Yearbook of the periodical *História*].

[14]*Weichs vezértábornagy feljegyzései*, p. 43.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]Reference to Emil Hacha (1873-1945), Czech politician, who after the German occupation became the president of the German-created Czech-Moravian Protectorate. Later he was arrested as war criminal and died in prison.

[17]*Weichs vezértábornagy feljegyzései*, p. 43.

[18]Ránki, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[19]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország*, p 749.

[20]*Magyar Nemzet*, 24 February 1944.

[21]The story was recorded and published by Áron Tóbiás relying on his conversation with Zoltán Szabó in London. *Magyar Nemzet*, December 24, 1993.

[22]See the preceding note.

[23]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország*, pp. 787-788, cited by Ránki, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

[24]Some claim that Horthy became quite passive, but such views are denied by the facts; however, a sort of reservation can really be observed in his attitude at the time.

[25]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország*, p. 785.

[26]*Ibid.*, cited by Ránki, pp. 140-141.

[27]*A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország*, p. 838.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 848.

[29]"The Hungarian people has lived to see the end of this war under much better conditions than that of the previous world war. Its war losses are minor now, its welfare is higher, and its ideology is ready." These frequently quoted words were also cited by Gyula Juhász in his paper "Az uralkodó eszmék zsákutcája" [The dead-end of the prevailing ideas], *História Évkönyv* 1984, p. 106.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 107.

[31]*Ibid.*

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Edmund Veesenmayer on Horthy and Hungary: An American Intelligence Report

N.F. Dreisziger

"As Minister to Hungary, Veesenmayer had something more than the normal duties of a Minister."
(*The Veesenmayer Interrogation Report, p. 21*)

"... it was a good thing if [Veesenmayer] did not always know everything that was going on (*i.e.* the Gestapo was doing) [in Hungary]."
(*SS leader Heinrich Himmler, cited ibid., p. 22*)

The role Edmund Veesenmayer played in twentieth century Hungarian history is almost without parallel. He was, to all intents and purposes, a *Gauleiter*, a kind of a modern *satrap*, in the country for the last year of the war. Hungary would have her share of quislings during the post-war communist era, but they would not be complete foreigners: the Mátyás Rákosis, the Ernő Gerős, the Ferenc Münnichs, the János Kádárs, and the Farkases (Mihály and Vladimir) had connections to Hungary, however tenuous in some cases.[1] Veesenmayer had no familial, ethnic or cultural ties to Hungary, he was simply an agent of a foreign power appointed to make sure that power's interests and wishes prevailed in the country. The closest parallel one finds to him in the post-war period is Marshal Klementy E. Voroshilov, the member of the Soviet leadership who was appointed as head of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary at the end of the war. Though Voroshilov's position most resembled Veesenmayer's, it is doubtful whether the Soviet General was as often involved in meddling in Hungarian affairs as was the energetic German commissioner and his SS cohorts. Not in vain did pundits in Hungary refer to Veesenmayer as *"Reichsverwesenmayer"* which is a play on words on his name and the German term for Regent: "*Reichsverweser.*"[2]

Edmund Veesenmayer was born in 1904 in Bad Kissingen, Bavaria. He attended the University of Munich and received a doctorate in economics in 1928. Subsequently, he taught economics at another institution of higher learning in the same city. In 1932 Veesenmayer joined the Nazi Party and soon thereafter became an assistant of Wilhelm Keppler, one of Hitler's economic advisers and the founder of an organization of industrialists and businessmen

who provided support for SS boss Heinrich Himmler. When Keppler was appointed Hitler's special agent in Austria in 1937, Veesenmayer accompanied him. Not long thereafter he became an economic expert in Vienna advising the German Foreign Office. From the summer of 1938 to early 1939 Veesenmayer was back in Berlin working with Keppler on Germany's Four-Year Plan. Thereafter he became the Third *Reich*'s principal troubleshooter in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. March of 1939 found him in Bratislava, assisting the preparations for the declaration of Slovak independence under German aegis. In August of the same year, just before the Nazi invasion of Poland, he would be in Danzig. In April of 1941, just before the German invasion of Yugoslavia, he would be in Zagreb. Other missions would follow, including trips to occupied Belgrade, a trip to Rome, and another visit to Zagreb (in 1942). In 1943 he returned to Berlin and was given the task of coordinating Axis (more precisely, German-Italian and Japanese) propaganda activities. Soon, however, more urgent tasks were found for him, these included resumed visits abroad, this time to Budapest, to study the attitudes to the war and the prosecution of the war effort by the Hungarian leadership and society. It is with this stage of his remarkable career that our document picks up the story. But before we begin to read about his activities in Budapest, it might be useful to examine Veesenmayer's political and, especially, economic ideas. In this connection it might be most useful to offer a précis of the first part of the document the second part of which we reproduce below in full detail.

Veesenmayer had joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) because he believed that the party's economic program promised progress and prosperity for Germany. He also hoped that such progress would save the country from communism. His own theories of economics were shaped by Adolf Weber of the University of Munich and Wilhelm Keppler with whom he would cooperate almost to the very end of the Nazi era. While Veesenmayer was enthusiastic about the NSDAP's economic platform, he had some doubts about the totalitarian system introduced in Germany as well as that country's involvement in global conflict. These doubts, however, were not strong enough for him to abandon the Nazi cause. He was also disappointed in the lackadaisical attitude the Nazi leaders, especially Hitler, had toward the science of economics. In the fall of 1945 he explained one of the weaknesses of the Nazi system by saying that the German genius for "organization" "organized not only what it should[,] but everything that it could."[3] Veesenmayer had probably come to this conclusion late during the war, or after its conclusion. In his interrogation he admitted having been a stalwart Nazi in his younger years (he had reached the honourary rank of *Brigadeführer* in the SS) but, after the war, he proclaimed complete disillusionment in Nazi ideas and the Nazi system. He suggested to his American captors that a major program of reeducation should be undertaken in post-war Germany and, as a part of this, intelligent, young Germans should be sent to the United States to be trained for the task of German reconstruction.[4]

The interrogations of Veesenmayer had taken place over several days during the third week of September, 1945. They took place in the headquarters of the American Military Intelligence Center in Oberursel. His chief interrogator was Harry N. Howard. The process was transacted in English and the report on the interrogations was produced from extensive notes taken, as well as from corroborative evidence, such as the interrogation reports of other German and Hungarian officials, including those of Regent Horthy (12 Sept. 1945) and Prime Minister László Bárdossy (9 Sept. 1945). The report was signed by DeWitt C. Poole, the head of the State Department Special Interrogation Mission.[5]

Like all other documents of this type, the Veesenmayer interrogation report by itself is useful mainly for persons with an extensive knowledge of the events and personalities concerned. As Veesenmayer was evidently not in possession of his notes and other relevant documents at the time of his interrogation, he had to rely on his memory, which might not have served him evenly and effectively. He might have also forgotten some developments or refrained from mentioning them for a number of reasons. No doubt, he also tried to show his own role in Hungary in as favourable light as he thought was possible under the circumstances — his comments on the "Jewish problem" are especially ill-informed or disingenuous. Furthermore, it is also possible that the transcript of the interrogation, or more precisely, the report based on it, having been written by American intelligence officers who probably did not have a thorough knowledge of the subject, was not a completely accurate reflection on what Veesenmayer had said in the interviews of September, 1995. Because of all these factors, it should be emphasized that those readers who are not intimately familiar with the subject, should read this report in conjunction with reliable works on this topic, and in particular, along with Dr. Pritz's paper in this volume.[6]

Despite these limitations of the Veesenmayer report of 1945, it offers much that is interesting to students of Hungarian wartime history, and is also useful to historians of the period who seek not so much new knowledge, but information that could confirm one or another of the historical interpretations of this period. In particular, the document not only reveals much about Veesenmayer's views about Horthy and his country (views which are not always perceptive), but gives glimpses of other matters as well, including — interestingly enough — other Hungarian leaders' assessments of Horthy, as told to, and later reported by, Veesenmayer. The report also contains information on Hungary's other leading personalities, on the country's politics, and, above all, on the nature of German rule in the country. In this latter connection the interrogation report time and again reveals that there were serious differences of view as well as of approaches among the Nazi leaders concerned with the running of Hungary's affairs. There was also duplication in responsibilities as well as overlaps in the authority of the people involved. All this lead to friction among the people and agencies concerned. Despite the vast powers that had been delegated to him by Hitler through the German Foreign Office (FO), Veesen-

mayer had no say in certain important matters since these were the responsibility of Nazi German agencies other than the FO. In these matters, Veesenmayer shared power with other Nazi officials assigned to Hungary. These included General Hans Greiffenberg who was in charge of military matters, and SS-Obergruppenführer Otto Winkelmann who oversaw German security interests in Hungary and whose Gestapo units and "Jewish evacuation" experts apparently operated without the approval — or even the knowledge — of either of Veesenmayer's office (so he claimed in 1945), or of the Hungarian authorities.

The document partially reproduced below can be found in the Records of the Office of Strategic Services (Record Group 266), the 1944-45 series, Box 312. Its document no. is XL 22552. It was declassified in 1973. It is deposited in the National Archives of the United States. I am indebted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Arts Research Program of the Department of National Defence of Canada for having made it possible for me to do research at the NAUS and other American and Canadian archives over the years. As is our custom, the document below is reproduced very much as it had been written, which means *inter alia* that diacritical marks on Hungarian names are not given. A few editorial comments or corrections are offered in square brackets. Misspelled names — and there are a lot of them, e.g. the name of Döme Sztójay is misspelled [Sztojai] throughout — are corrected only the first time they occur. Misspelled names that might be unrecognizable to the reader, or are comical — General Rátz is written as "Rats"— however, are corrected each time. Those parts of the document that contained very irrelevant information or were confusing, were omitted.

NOTES

[1]Most of Hungary's communist leaders hailed from the country's religious or ethnic minorities — Kádár's mother was Slovak, many of the other top communists were of Jewish origin. Moreover, some of them had strong Soviet links — including, in some cases, Russian spouses, Soviet citizenship, and official membership in Soviet Russian military and/or intelligence organizations. They at least, spoke Hungarian.

[2]Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1994), p. 337. The letter "v" in Hungarian is pronounced very much like the "w" in German.

[3]The report of the interrogation of Veesenmayer, 5 Oct. 1945, p. 3.

[4]*Ibid.*, pp. 3f.

[5]DeWitt C. Poole was a highly qualified American academic who had had a great deal of interest in the lands of the former Habsburg Empire and who had headed the Foreign Nationalities Branch of the Office of Strategic Services from 1942 to 1945..

[6]Under "reliable works" on the subject we have in mind Professor Sakmyster's biography of Horthy mentioned above, and such treatments as C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945* (Edinburgh, 1957, 2nd edn, 1961, 2 vols.), and Péter Gosztonyi, *A magyar honvédség a második világháborúban* [The Hungarian Army in the Second World War] (Roma, 1986).

Appendix

Part II of the Interrogation Report on Veesenmayer: Hungary

Mission to Budapest, March 1943

From now on Veesenmayer's activities and attention were almost entirely centred on the Hungarian problem. At the beginning of March 1943 he was sent on a mission to Budapest for about three weeks. The purpose was to view the whole situation, especially in Budapest, in the interest of the prosecution of the war effort. He was also to find out the ideas of the different Hungarian parties, both within the Government and the Opposition.

The "Party of Hungarian Life" — the Government Party — included various elements and tendencies which were not always unified in a program, he found. There was a young people's organization, similar in nature to the Hitlerjugend, but its only program was one of national aggrandizement. It had no special and economic program worth serious consideration.

Veesenmayer met [party leader] Bela Imredy [Béla Imrédy] a number of times during this period. Imredy, Premier in 1939, had made a number of proposals for land reform, and was not in good favor with Horthy. Veesenmayer had not yet met Horthy, but considered him merely a "function" of the landlords, as the Government was dominated by this element. The Church was included among the big landlords, and Cardinal Seredi [Justinián Serédi] was one the greatest land-holders of the country. Veesenmayer thought Hungary a hundred years behind the times. All political power was concentrated in Budapest, the rest of the country not counting for anything in a political sense. The landlords dominated the situation — they spent the summer and autumn on their estates, and then lived in Budapest in the winter, spending their money and using their influence against reform. Horthy would stand for no land reform, and it was impossible to change the situation. Later on, Veesenmayer remarked, Horthy would never allow him even to mention land reform!

Veesenmayer did not recall the details of his conversations with Imredy while engaged in this "intelligence" work, beyond remarking that they spoke of how the war was going for the Axis. Some groups in the Government party were showing independence; this did not make for good relations with the German Government. Veesenmayer felt that the atmosphere was not trending

[sic, i.e. unfolding] favorably, and that there must be a "sharper" control of the situation in Hungary, so that there would be no "surprises" in the future.

As long as the war developed favorably, things went well in Hungary and the country was "safe" for the Axis. But with the news from Stalingrad and North Africa, this was no longer true. At the same time economic developments were disappointing. Hungary had been important for Germany in the matter of agriculture, oil and bauxite. While production had only been about 100,000 tons in the first years of the war, by 1944 Hungary was producing about 800,000 tons of oil per year. The bauxite development was also new, and Germany had supplied about one third of the invested capital. Nevertheless, it was felt that Hungary could do more in the war effort, and German-Hungarian commercial relations could be improved, if proper "clearing" facilities were provided. It was for these reasons, primarily, that Veesenmayer had been sent to the country.

Veesenmayer said that the Szent Gyorgy incident had nothing to do with his visit, since he had heard of this only a year later. He did say that the German Government and he, personally, despite Horthy's repeated denials, had the feeling that Professor Szent Gyorgy [Albert Szent-Györgyi, biochemist, Nobel laureate (1937)], in his journey to Turkey during March 1943, had some official connection, although he may not have been an "official" agent. Veesenmayer then compared the Szent Gyorgy visit to Turkey with his own to Hungary at this time.

During this visit to Hungary, Veesenmayer said he had had no contact at all with Major Szalasi [Ferenc Szálasi], the leader of the Arrow Cross Party. This was on instructions from the Foreign Office, which did not want to muddy the waters in its contacts with the Hungarian Government. This same was also true in November 1943.

He did see Col. Gen. Ruskay [Jenő Ruszkay], retired, however, who was somewhat of a politician, and a strong nationalist. Ruskay had contacts with the Archduke Albrecht, although Veesenmayer did not see the latter because Hitler did not like him. Albrecht hated Horthy, and the sentiment was reciprocated. He saw Raynics [Ferenc Rajnics], the well-known Hungarian journalist, M.P., and member of the opposition, who was of the Imredy party, although he pursued an independent course, too. Another person whom he met was Messer[?], who later on was Szalasi's Minister in Berlin. Messer was President of the German-Hungarian Chamber of Commerce. Veesenmayer had no contact with the Small Farmer's Party of Tibor Eckhardt, since he thought it of no consequence. Neither did he get into touch with the Social Democrats, since they were not powerful and were more interested in internal affairs than in foreign politics. Veesenmayer did talk with General Rats [Jenő Rátz], who was later the second man in the Sztojai Government [the government of Döme Sztójay]. Formerly on the General Staff, Horthy had fired him because he had criticized Hungary's limited participation in the war. [Rátz] was a fanatical nationalist, who, like all Hungarian leaders, hated the Rumanians. Veesenmayer also talked with industrialists and financiers.

On his return to Berlin, Veesenmayer made a report to the Foreign Office, which went to Ribbentrop. He said that there was no doubt that Kallay [Prime Minster Miklós Kállay] was disloyal to Germany, and was not wholeheartedly supporting the war; on the contrary, he would try to get out of the war at the first opportunity. He also described the position of the various opposition groups. Veesenmayer thought that there were latent dangers in the political situation in Hungary if the war went unfavorably, especially in economic questions, and particularly in connection with raw materials, food and oil. He reported on the importance of Horthy and his entourage, expressing his conviction that any change could only come with the cooperation of Horthy, since Horthy was a vital part of the landlord-dominated government. The change must come through German influence with Horthy, not against him.

Veesenmayer was also convinced that improved relations must be generated between Hungary and its neighbours — Slovakia, Rumania, Croatia, and Serbia — if the war were to be fought to a successful conclusion in Southeastern Europe. Hungary had never had good relations with its neighbours, because Hungarian nationalists always wanted everything, and this situation could not be allowed to continue. In particular he cited the Hungarian demands as to Siebenbuergen, the Banat [Bánát] and Prekomurje. The Germans continued to occupy the Banat, and had decided to give it to Hungary only after the war so that they could continue to get the goods out free of difficulty with Hungarian "clearing".

Veesenmayer's report was sent to Ribbentrop, who was interested, and told Hitler of it, but nothing was heard after that. Meanwhile the situation became worse in Hungary.

Mission to Budapest, November 1943

At the beginning of November 1943, Veesenmayer was sent on a similar mission to Hungary and remained there for three or four weeks. The situation was now getting worse. Italy had surrendered. Andor Henke, of the Foreign Office, thought that Veesenmayer should return for further study of conditions in Hungary.

On this trip Veesenmayer saw Count Bethlen [former Prime Minister István Bethlen], whom he found "correct", but anti-German as well as anti-Soviet. Bethlen wanted to get out of the war. Veesenmayer also saw Imredy and talked over the situation with him. Another was Jurcek [Béla Jurcsek], undersecretary in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, who was very important for German-Hungarian economic relations.

Imredy felt that the situation was very grave, and thought the Government must be changed to include members of the opposition, but he was not very active at this time. Veesenmayer was much impressed with Imredy's intelligence, character, and integrity, and felt that he would be an excellent man

to lead Hungary. He neither drank nor smoked, although Veesenmayer thought that perhaps Imredy, like Hitler, might have benefited by such vices!

Veesenmayer also had a long talk with Laszlo de Bardossy [László Bárdossy], former Minister to Great Britain, and former Premier of Hungary (1941-1942). Ribbentrop had asked Veesenmayer to see Bardossy, since he had a very favourable impression of the latter in London. Bardossy impressed Veesenmayer. With Messer, he considered him as one of the most intelligent man he had seen in Hungary. He had an excellent "dialectic", looked well, had temperament, a winning personality, and was altogether agreeable. He saw problems from a higher point of view than that of mere personal advantage.

Bardossy was, however, really a sick man and not active politically. He was especially opposed to Horthy, whom he held responsible for the failure to make social reforms in Hungary. He also felt that if all the forces of the country were really concentrated, Hungary could make a far greater contribution to the war effort of the Axis. Bardossy told him that Horthy was the real heart and centre of the secret Hungarian opposition to the war. He expressed himself with some reserve, but one could read between the lines without difficulty. Bardossy was against the Russians, since he felt that the Russians had no real culture and he was a man of great culture. Veesenmayer asked Bardossy who might be a good man to lead a Hungarian government in the desired direction, and was told that Imredy was the best man, since he was a friend of Germany, a man of integrity, who had been a soldier in two wars. Moreover, he was a good economist.

Veesenmayer made a report similar to the one he had made following his March visit to Budapest. He indicated that there was now great danger, that Kallay was going his own way. All in all he thought that in one more year, Hungary would be out of the war. He saw that the greater part of the government party was moving toward the right [i.e. right-wing] opposition groups. The reason for this was that it was now becoming clear that a country could not fight the Soviet Union and still remain friendly with Great Britain and the United States. It had to be all or nothing. This was especially true after the Moscow Conference. There was no chance now of help from the Anglo-Americans. Even the landlords, many of whom did not "like" the war, were now willing to throw in their weight against the Soviet Union, well knowing that if the Russians were victorious, it meant the loss of their estates and position in Hungary. But all this was very complex, and Veesenmayer thought that it was often difficult to tell which was "left" and which "right" in Hungarian politics. He felt that the politicians in Budapest spent most of their time with the "do-nothings" in the cafe night life — which was, however, a pleasant pastime.

Veesenmayer also felt that Major Szalasi, whom he had not seen, was sincere about land reform, although Horthy hated him for precisely this reason. The radicalism of Szalasi and the Arrow Cross Party was a necessity for Hungary. General Goemboes [former Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös] had seen the political future of Szalasi years ago, when the latter had reported that in

order to make a strong, popular army, the Government would have to carry through necessary political and economic reforms. In Veesenmayer's mind Szalasi was a man of character and integrity, and denied that he had ever taken a single pengo [*pengő*, the basic unit of Hungarian currency at the time] from Germany.

Veesenmayer was back in Berlin in December. He was called promptly to Ribbentrop's headquarters to discuss the situation in Hungary, but Ribbentrop upbraided him for criticizing the Fuehrer's policy in Hungary! Ribbentrop did not like Veesenmayer's report at all, and sent it back to Berlin. Veesenmayer remarked in this connection that in order to understand Germany and German policy one had to know the personalities of Ribbentrop and Hitler, neither of whom would accept an objective analysis of a situation. They did not want the truth and people were afraid to tell them anything which they did not want to hear. It was the kind of thing which rendered intelligent work in the Foreign Office well-high impossible.

The Fuehrer's Headquarter, February 8 - March 19,1944

Veesenmayer remained in Berlin for some time, but in the early part of February he was called back to the Fuehrer's headquarters in East Prussia, near Rastenburg. Horthy had written the Fuehrer a letter saying that he wanted the Hungarian divisions on the German-Russian front withdrawn. Hitler, thereupon, sent for Veesenmayer, who remained at headquarters, largely doing nothing, for about six weeks. The last three weeks, however, were spent at Salzburg.

When Hitler asked Veesenmayer about Hungary, Veesenmayer suggested that it would be wise to have Horthy come for conference with Hitler. Hitler, however, remained silent on this suggestion. Hitler, incidentally, did not appear to be acting naturally at this time, Veesenmayer thought, although he could not specify anything in particular. Veesenmayer knew, he said, that Horthy did not like either Hitler personally or the Germans in general, and wanted to get out of the war, but felt that this was impossible for Horthy.

Veesenmayer thought it would have been wise for Hitler to have met his allies more often in conference,... Among other things, Veesenmayer thought — but did not tell Hitler — that he should let his allies know what the German post-war program for Europe was. In any case, Hitler might be able to explain things to Horthy in a conference.

Within about three weeks the group went to Salzburg, Veesenmayer staying at the Oesterreichshof, Ribbentrop at Fuschl and Hitler at Schloss Klessheim.

Ribbentrop also endorsed the visit of Horthy, and the latter ultimately came to Schloss Klessheim, spending one night there. Veesenmayer took no part in the discussions at Schloss Klessheim, although he presumed that they were primarily concerned with military matters, since the military problem was uppermost, and in any case Hitler was not interested in anything else.

Until the last moment Veesenmayer could not be sure that he was going to be appointed Minister to Hungary, for both [SS chief Heinrich] Himmler and Martin Bormann, who considered him too moderate and independent, were opposed to him. They wanted to appoint an old Party man, Dr. Jury, the Gauleiter for Lower Austria. Jury was an M.D., an SS/Obergruppenfuehrer, and a true servant of Himmler, [Ernst] Kaltenbrunner and Bormann[;] while Veesenmayer was somewhat younger in years and in Party service. In the end, Hitler himself decided in favor of Veesenmayer, and Ribbentrop acquiesced, because of Veesenmayer's earlier correct analysis of the Hungarian situation.

The trip back to Budapest was made with two parties, one Hungarian and the other German, on March 18-19. Veesenmayer asserted that Horthy was a free man on the trip and not [in] the custody of Kaltenbrunner. The train left about 8 o'clock, as Veesenmayer recalled, stopping by pre-arrangement about 4 a.m., March 19, so that he and Kaltenbrunner could telephone Budapest. This time had been fixed for the entry of German troops into Hungary. He had heard about the German invasion plans three or four days prior to this, although he presumed that some plans, including all alternative possibilities, had been made at least two weeks before. The code word was Margherita, named after the island in the Danube at Budapest. Veesenmayer gave information to General von Greiffenberg, the German commander, that everything was all right, and all were returning to Budapest. Greiffenberg, in turn, was to advise von Kallay and have him come to the station to welcome the party. There would be no resistance on the part of the Hungarian troops.

At about 10 o'clock on the morning of March 19 the Ministers to Hungary were changed. [Obergruppenführer Dietrich] von Jagow went into Horthy's compartment on the train about 9.30 to present his letters of recall and Veesenmayer came in somewhat later to present his credentials. Horthy then asked Veesenmayer whom he proposed as von Kallay's successor; Veesenmayer suggesting Bela Imredy, Horthy indicated that this was impossible because of Imredy's Jewish blood, and expressed his surprise that he should be proposed by a Nazi. Veesenmayer added that Kaltenbrunner was also opposed to Imredy, along with the SD [*Sicherheitsdienst*, the Nazi Party's intelligence and security organ]. Dr. Hoettl, in addition, had written an attack on Imredy, and had proposed Count Palffy [Fidél Pálffy], of the Hungarian National Socialist Party.

The train arrived in Budapest about 11 o'clock, and von Jagow and Veesenmayer went to the German Legation together, while Horthy went to the castle. Horthy was a free man, Veesenmayer averred, although there were

German "honor guards" posted at the castle. Horthy called a Crown Council in mid-afternoon, and arranged for the resignation of the Kallay government.

Veesenmayer went to work immediately, and during the next hour talked with a number of Hungarian leaders. Imredy came to the Legation, as did [Rátz], Raynics, Jurcek, and Ruskay. He sent a message to Bardossy as well. The next day Sztojai came, sent by Horthy, to ask if the German Government would agree to his appointment as Prime Minister. Veesenmayer telegraphed an inquiry to the Foreign Office, which answered it agreed, but would want to see the list of ministers. Sztojai met with the opposition leaders, made a list and showed it to Veesenmayer, who also proposed [Rátz] and suggested Jurcek. Horthy concurred.

Although Horthy told Veesenmayer that he liked German troops and did not object to the honor guard, the German military understood differently, and they were withdrawn. Moreover, within three to six days, Veesenmayer said, he obtained withdrawal of the German divisions. He said that he was not fearful at all of Hungarian resistance, since the people liked German soldiers and got along with them. From the OKW, however, came orders that Hungarian troops were to surrender their arms and remain in their posts. Veesenmayer protested this order and it was rescinded [editor: not entirely]. He exercised no pressure on the Government, he said — only "influence" — except where he had direct orders to the contrary and had to threaten people with the consequences if they did not obey. He always believed in the English "style" of government, i.e.: acting through the forms of Hungarian sovereignty, if not the substance.

In the course of an interrogation at Nuremberg September 10, 1945, Ribbentrop said he remembered clearly that two men were in Hungary when it was occupied. One was Veesenmayer; the other a man from Himmler [police commander SS *Obergruppenführer* Otto Winkelmann]. It was the latter who took a severe attitude, particularly about the Jews. Veesenmayer was "attacked because of his moderating influence". Veesenmayer would deal with officials in an official capacity, whereas Himmler's man would by-pass diplomatic channels. That created great difficulties for Veesenmayer, Ribbentrop related.

The German Legation in Budapest

Veesenmayer was now in full command of the German Legation in Budapest, and he had a number of able assistants.

Among these was Kurt Haller, about 32 years of age, who had studied law before the war, and had been a member of the Abwehr [the military intelligence organization of Admiral Canaris]. Veesenmayer had known him in connection with his own work on the Irish problem. Not satisfied with the Abwehr, Haller had obtained employment in the German Foreign Office, and worked for Keppler, breaking all connections with the Abwehr, although he kept his friends and contacts in that organization. Veesenmayer took him to Budapest

on March 19, 1944, because he knew his abilities, although Haller had never been there before. He served as Veesenmayer's intelligence officer and had contacts with all parties and groups, and especially with Major Szalasi. Haller was very able and objective in analyzing a situation, but had an appendectomy at the end of October 1944, and was last seen about April 29, 1945. He had good relations with Baron Kemeny [Gábor Kemény], Szalasi's Foreign Minister and tried to get into touch with Count Bethlen but failed.

It was through Haller that Veesenmayer first came into contact with Carl Berthold Franz Rekowski, his personal Referent in Budapest, who also had had connections with the Abwehr during the early part of the war. Rekowski was a business man who had lived in New York and Mexico City, and had done especially well in the paper and oil business in Mexico. Rekowski did not like the war and was not a politician, but was a "one hundred percent money-maker". He was never a member of the party. Rekowski had had charge of the welfare of the Grand Mufti and Rashid Ali Gailani, and his wife had received a medal for her domestic services in this connection. Rekowski had entered the Foreign Office as a war service, and was a very good man, efficient and agreeable. Veesenmayer had called him to Salzburg in March 1944 and had taken him along to Budapest, having met him four or five times before.

Sometimes when Veesenmayer was "desperate" in Budapest, in view of the unfavorable development of the war, he would go to Rekowski's apartment, and on one occasion Rekowski expressed his bitterness with those who had got Germany into the war and brought on disaster. Veesenmayer had agreed with these sentiments. Rekowski's only ambition was to get it over with and leave Germany for ever. As his personal secretary and "right hand man", Rekowski had his office just outside that of Veesenmayer, and was in charge of passport matters as consul in Budapest; but his primary work was with Veesenmayer. Rekowski was also Veesenmayer's contact with Winkelmann, who was not so "agreeable" to Veesenmayer.

Gerhard Feine, about fifty years old, was a Geheimrat in the Foreign Office, and had the usual duties pertaining to that office. A career diplomat, Feine had first met Veesenmayer in the Belgrade Legation in 1940.

Adamovic, Referent for legal problems, was ill most of the time, and was succeeded by Grell, but there was very little for either to do in war time.

Bruenhof was Referent for Press Relations between Germany and Hungary. He did not really control the Hungarian press, but did influence it. The Hungarian Government had its own controls, but most of the world news came through [the German news service] DNB. Bruenhof kept in touch with the Hungarian Press Office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also with the press office in the Ministry-Presidency of the Council. Bruenhof did not have to exercise much pressure since the Hungarian papers seldom got out of line.

Niebelschuetz was Radio attache and his problems were similar to those of the press Referent. There were very few difficulties in influencing the radio. The monitoring service was good, and Veesenmayer received daily reports.

Dr. Boden and Herr Englert were economic experts. Dr. Boden had been on the Board of Directors of the AEG and also of Standard and Veesenmayer had brought him to Hungary because of his expert economic judgment.

Katschinka was the Propagandareferent, but was not very active. He did, however, at times influence the press, radio, and the cinema through the use of money. Triska was Kulturreferent, but there was not much for this officer to do in wartime. Likewise, Meckel, Volksdeutscher Referent, was not very active, and was to boot ill with tuberculosis. He was not an important official, although Veesenmayer indicated that there were 1,000,000 Volksdeutsche in Hungary.

General [Hans] von Greiffenberg was the military attache in Budapest and Lt. General [Kuno Heribert] Fruettener the Air Attache. However both had active commands and in that capacity could and did pursue an independent course. In general, however, both officers were loyal to Veesenmayer, especially von Greiffenberg.

There were also consulates in Budapest (Rekowski), Kaschau [Kassa, today Košice] (Count Matuschka), Debre[c]en (Kampf), Klausenburg [Kolozsvár, today Cluj] (Strak), and Szeged (Lurtz). Telephone, telegraph and railway communications with the consulates, however, were extremely difficult, and [the consulates] were closed up one by one as the Russian front advanced.

Veesenmayer had a peculiar relationship with SS/Obergruppenfuehrer Otto Winkelmann, who was also Lt. Gen. of Police, since Winkelmann, was directly responsible to Himmler, not to Veesenmayer, and took his orders only from Himmler. Winkelmann had charge of matters pertaining to the Volksdeutsche, for example, since Himmler was in direct charge of the Volksdeutsche, Winkelmann also had direct orders from Himmler as to political and economic matters, and was independent of Veesenmayer in this respect. He was also independent in police matters, and the legation had no police attache, which was usual in other legations, for control of passports, criminals, etc. Because Himmler was the most important man in Germany after Hitler himself, people like Winkelmann often acted very independently. Veesenmayer had many difficulties with Winkelmann, although he did not dislike him personally. Especially outstanding were difficulties over the Mannfried [Manfréd] Weiss Case, the problem of Imredy, and the Jewish question. [Editor's note: these cases are discussed below, under separate headings.]

The Auslandsorganisation [AO]

The AO made its own policy in the Balkans, and sought its own information through its own sources. Veesenmayer had no connection with the AO. There were only about 1,000 Reichsdeutsche in Hungary, and the AO was not concerned with the Volksdeutsche. All in all, Veesenmayer felt that the AO was much overrated, and really played a very insignificant role in all Southeastern Europe, although Neuhausen, an AO representative, was active in Belgrade. On

the whole, the influence of the AO on foreign policy was bad, Veesenmayer thought, since such matters should have been a function of the legations, and "too many cooks spoil the broth". Veesenmayer said that it was a cardinal point with him that party politics should be left at home, and should not be mixed with foreign policy.

Many foreign countries had considered the AO a "fifth column", but Veesenmayer thought it actually rather ineffective and it certainly did more harm that good. Bohle, the leader of the AO was too young, and too ambitious, and too much of a "know-it-all". Veesenmayer had "reckoned" with Bohle in Wiesbaden on the Bodenstadtstrasse, and had met him for the first time there. The one thing on which Veesenmayer agreed with Ribbentrop was with respect to Bohle and the AO, and he thought the entire Foreign Office was agreed as to that. On the other hand, the AO did very well in caring for wounded soldiers, giving them coffee and drinks, etc.

The Volksdeutsche

Few broad problems concerning the Hungarian Volksdeutsche arose during the war, although these Hungarians of German ethnic origin, through Dr. [Franz] Basch, their leader, made demands on the Hungarian Government for an enlargement of their rights. The primary question ("ninety percent of the problem") in wartime was concerned with luring young Volksdeutsche into the Waffen SS organization, since they could not enter the German army. Under an agreement between Winkelmann and the Hungarian War Minister in the Sztojai government, provision was made for their entry into the Waffen SS. This was supplemented by another agreement. Veesenmayer had nothing to do with these arrangements beyond that of formal approval and submission to Berlin. Before 1944 there were about 40,000 Volksdeutsche who had gone into the Waffen SS and about 30-40,000 in 1944. The 10th and 19th divisions were made up of Volksdeutsche, but few of them actually saw combat.

Veesenmayer's Instructions as Minister in Hungary

As Minister to Hungary, Veesenmayer had something more than the normal duties of a Minister. He was to form new government with men who favored German influence in Hungary, he was to coordinate the German and Hungarian efforts in the war, and to help Hungarian matters of communication (railroads, dams, etc.). His mission, however, did not include 1) military matters which were referred to General von Greiffenberg, 2) police questions, including the Jewish problem, which were in the province of Winkelmann, who was directly responsible to Himmler, and 3) the problem of the Volksdeutsche, which was also within Winkelmann's independent province. Veesenmayer was in

charge of economic problems, generally, but the Foreign Office had sent him Dr. Boden [economic] attache, who had been AEG Director in Berlin. Under Dr. Boden was also the DIKO (Deutsche Industrie Kommission), whose task it was to coordinate German-Hungarian industry.

The Sztojai Government, March 19 - end of August 1944

Veesenmayer had excellent relation with Sztojai, who had been Hungarian Minister to Berlin, throughout his period in office as Prime Minister of Hungary. Sztojai was a pleasant man, although frequently ill, having come to Budapest from a sanatorium; he had to take frequent rests. Veesenmayer also had few protests from Horthy during this period, and Horthy once told him that he was a "correct", good man. Horthy did not like the SD or the SS, however, but there were no sharp conflicts.

Sztojai tried to found a single party, since he did not like party conflicts, but Veesenmayer felt that such a fusion of parties was impossible. Sztojai finally resigned because of illness. It was also true that he was not an able politician; moreover, Sztojai knew that the entourage around Horthy had been working against him, and this constituted another reason for his resignation. [Rátz] had resigned of his own accord in May. He could have been a man of influence, but liked the easy life too well to exert himself in this direction.

The Case of the Mannfried [Manfréd] Weiss Works

One of the serious problems which arose during the period of the Sztojai government was that of the Mannfried Weiss Works, the largest concern in Hungary, employing about 20,000 people. This plant was situated on the Island of [Csepel] in the Danube, and was owned by some Jews who were in the hands of Himmler's SS near Vienna. When Sztojai came to power, the Government, in its law concerning Jewish possessions had decreed that Jewish plants were to go to the Government; moreover, Jews were forbidden to dispose of their property in ways which would avoid seizure or purchase by the government.

The case broke during the latter part of May or the early part of June 1944. Without the knowledge of the Hungarian Government or of Veesenmayer, a special representative of Himmler, Bechler made an agreement with the Jewish owners, ([Ferenc] Chorin, [Sámuel? Leó?] Goldberger, and Mannfried [Manfréd] Weiss [Jr.?]) to purchase their shares in behalf of the SS. In return, these men and their families, about thirty people in all, were to be transported in two airplanes to Lisbon. [Editor's note: Leó Goldberger refused to leave the country with his relatives. He died of malnutrition soon after he was liberated from Nazi concentration camp in March, 1945.] Some millions of marks and jewellery were involved. When the Hungarian Government heard of it there were protests,

and Imredy was incensed about the matter. Veesenmayer told them that he had known nothing about the matter.

Finally, Winkelmann came to see Veesenmayer and informed him that the Weiss Works had been purchased on the orders of Himmler and that Veesenmayer would have to help obtain the consent of the Hungarian Government. This he refused to do, and reporting to the Foreign Office, elaborated on the repercussions this action would have in Hungarian-German relations.

About June 6-7, Sztojai went to Salzburg to see Hitler. One day before Veesenmayer had been called to Salzburg, and had told Ribbentrop about the problem, but Ribbentrop could do nothing and advised Veesenmayer to see Himmler. Veesenmayer then saw Himmler during the night, but was told he was a weakling and neither a fitting representative of Germany in Hungary nor of the SS (in which Veesenmayer held the honorary rank of Brigadefuehrer). Himmler indicated that if Veesenmayer did not cease to protest, he would advise the Fuehrer, who had agreed as to the purchase, and Veesenmayer would then be opposing the will of the Fuehrer. Himmler also remarked that he felt it was a good thing if the minister did not always know everything that was going on in the country to which he was assigned.

Veesenmayer at this point remarked that he had never been a member of the SD, and was only an honorary member of the SS, and was in no way responsible to Himmler. Later, at a meeting of his legation staff, he had told the members that he would take nothing from the Jews and that they must not. He further remarked that he had offered his resignation to Ribbentrop, saying that he could not return to Hungary after what had happened, but that Ribbentrop had refused to accept his resignation and had ordered him to return to Budapest. Moreover, he was ordered not to speak of the case again, the alternative being the concentration camp.

The Imredy Case

A second serious problem developed in the case of Bela Imredy. Veesenmayer originally had wanted Imredy as Minister President of Hungary. Later, however, he suggested that Sztojai name him as Minister for Economic Affairs, a post that would embody not only the usual functions of this ministry, but those of the ministries of communications, agriculture, and exports and imports. Imredy would act in this capacity as a sort of "coordinator" for economic affairs. Imredy visited Horthy about the beginning of May, and Sztojai spoke to him about the matter. Jarross and Kundei [sic, Antal Kunder?], of Imredy's party, were already in the government, and Sztojai proposed Imredy's name to the Regent, who agreed to accept him. Veesenmayer thought that this appointment would be a tremendous help to Dr. Boden, the economist of the Legation.

Nevertheless, Veesenmayer felt the opposition of SS Leader Kaltenbrunner and SS/Obergruppenfuehrer Winkelmann. Although Kaltenbrunner visited Budapest often during this period, Veesenmayer did not see him. At the end of July or the beginning of August, Winkelmann gave an interview denouncing Imredy because of his Jewish descent. Suddenly there was a whispering campaign. Imredy, Jarross and Kunde[r] protested to Veesenmayer; Imredy could not understand how one German agency could favour him and another denounce him. Veesenmayer indicated that he had known nothing of the attack — and naturally could not work against himself! He reported the matter to the Foreign Office, and offered for the second time to resign because of these SS activities, over which he had no control at all. But it was now too late, for Winkelmann complained to Neubacher about divided responsibilities and policies, but Neubacher reminded him that in other countries the Germans had "two, three, four or six" people who made policy in as many different directions.

The Jewish Problem

A third problem which took form and substance during the period of the Sztojai Government was the Jewish question. The problem began to develop first in the provinces and then spread to Budapest. The Sztojai regime [sic, the Imrédy government in 1939] was the first to promulgate anti-Semitic regulations with respect to property and other matters, and later governments added to them. There were several hundred thousand Jews in Budapest. The Jews, inimical both to the government and the Germans, struck against working on fortifications. The reports from the foreign press about the Jewish question added fuel to the fire; Horthy, moreover, had received communications both from the Pope and from the King of Sweden about the middle of September concerning this matter.

In May 1944, Sztojai had made an agreement with Germany as to sending Jews to Germany for work, and a commission had gone to Berlin to look into the problem and make arrangements. [SS *Obersturmbannführer* Adolf] Eichmann, a special representative of Himmler on Jewish problems, Winkelmann and Himmler himself were primarily involved. But the movement of Jews to Germany had been halted when [General Géza] Lakatos succeeded Sztojai, because the Hungarian Government wanted them to work on fortifications around Budapest. About 50,000 were involved in this work, including men and women. Some had already been sent to Austria to construct underground war plants. There had been no protests about the matter from the Hungarian Government, although Horthy showed some concern about food, clothing and shelter for these Jews.

The main difference between the Sztojai and Lakatos regimes in the matter of the Jewish problem, in Veesenmayer's opinion, was that the latter wanted the Jews to work in Hungary, while Sztojai was in favour of transporting them to Germany for labour. Altogether, Veesenmayer thought, from 500,000 to

400,000 Jews had been sent from Hungary to Germany. Although he had sent some telegrams to the Foreign Office concerning the transportation of these Jews, Eichmann and Winkelmann were primarily responsible, especially the former.

Asked if he had received any instructions or communications from the Foreign Office in this respect, Veesenmayer said that in March 1944, Ribbentrop had asked him what to do about the Jewish problem, and in the course of the talk had suggested that the Jews might be sent to America! But the Hungarian Jewish problem, Veesenmayer reiterated, was not in his hands.

During the Szalasi regime, however, Veesenmayer had protested, he said, about the treatment of the Jews who were working on the Ostwall on the Austro-Hungarian frontier. There were no trains, and food and shelter against the cold were very poor. Not many more Jews had been sent out at this time, however, most of them were concentrated in Budapest.

Horthy himself was bitterly anti-Semitic. He had fought against the Bela Kun regime and often accused Jews of being Communist in sympathy. During the period under discussion Horthy had condemned many Jews to death. He hated the Jews as few did, and once referred to Imredy as a Jew. [Editor's note: on this subject see the pertinent parts of the introductory essay to this volume.]

Veesenmayer said that he thought the great shame of Germany was the handling of the Jewish problem. Germany had once had a great name in the arts and sciences, now, because of the Hitler regime, the German name had been dragged in the mire. Once he had been proud to be a German, but now he wondered if a German could lift up his head again. The crime of the people like him was to have served such a regime, he thought, even if they had not always known what was going on, as he said he had not. He first learned of conditions in concentration camps, he remarked, when he was brought to a prison camp and shown pictures.

The Lakatos Government, End of August - October 15, 1944

The military situation dominated the entire picture in Hungary during the period of the Lakatos Government, and the position of Hungary, as well as that of the Government, became increasingly grave. The members of the opposition who were in the Cabinet protested against the weakness of Lakatos, and a movement had begun to concentrate all the opposition elements into a National bloc. This movement consisted of the leaders of the Nationalist parties and the President of the Parliament, together with members of the Hungarian House of Lords. The leader of the so-called Ostfrontkaempferbund was also involved, and telegrams were sent to all members of Parliament and the Government. For the first time Szalasi took part in such a movement, since he felt that the national interest demanded political unity. A committee of ten to twelve members of the group out of 150, including General [Rátz], went to Lakatos and urged maximum

protection of the war against Russia. Veesenmayer sympathized with them, but did not take an active part in the movement.

Another factor which contributed to the ultimate resignation of Lakatos was concerned with the journey of Col. General Miklos [Béla Miklós], together with his secretary, to the Russians with proposals for terms. Horthy was a party to this move, although Lakatos knew nothing about it at the time....

The Arrest of Horthy's Son, October 15, 1944

The SD had information that Admiral Horthy's son, at this time, was in contact with the Russians and also with the British and the Americans, and had been so for about a year. This had been reported to Kaltenbrunner, Himmler and Hitler. Veesenmayer had also heard that an English officer was supposed to be in Budapest, but there were many rumours and he did not believe many of them, although the SD was well informed. Veesenmayer learned, too, about an American mission, composed of three officers, which had arrived in Budapest in March [editor's note: the OSS' Mission Sparrow], before his advent as Minister. This mission had got into touch with some officers of the War Ministry. Horthy was in Salzburg at the time, and, at the instance [sic, insistence?] of General Buettere, they were turned over to the Germans. There was also an unknown plane, with unknown occupants, which had flown to Italy.

When Horthy's son was interrogated by the Germans later on, it was learned that Horthy himself had been informed of all these moves. There had been no earlier proof as to the matter, however, as the Hungarian police under Lakatos were not very helpful in such problems. Lakatos himself was very poorly informed and not often au courant as to the activities of Horthy and his entourage. Indeed, the weakness of the Lakatos government was apparent to everybody.

Until the last moment, Lakatos worked closely with Veesenmayer, and did what he could during the hours of October 15-16 to avoid any armed conflict with the Germans. He told Veesenmayer that if he had known of Horthy's intrigues he would have resigned much earlier.

October 15, 1944 fell on Sunday. On this day there was a plot, organized by [Otto] Skorzeny, the "rescuer" of Mussolini, to get Horthy's son into custody by telling him that an agent of Marshall Tito wanted to see him. He was then approached [sic, captured] by the SD and taken to Vienna for interrogation.

The Abdication of the Regent, October 15-16, 1944

About noon on October 15, Veesenmayer went to Horthy, who protested against the arrest of this son and threatened to hold Veesenmayer as hostage. The entire Hungarian cabinet was also present at the castle by this time. Horthy

reported to them on his contacts with the Allies, and said that he had decided to ask the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States for terms, although not unconditional terms. Veesenmayer protested that he would have to inform his government, since he saw in such a move a definite break in Hungarian-German friendship. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office had sent Ambassador [Rudolf] Rahn (Italy) to Budapest to help Veesenmayer, since Ribbentrop was not sure that Veesenmayer could handle the situation alone.

Veesenmayer was only able to leave the castle grounds, strongly guarded by Hungarian troops, after he had protested for about fifteen minutes. Rahn then talked with Horthy for about forty-five minutes, at the end of which Horthy agreed not to come to terms with the enemy. At the same time, however, the Budapest radio was announcing his request for terms.

From that moment, in view of his perfidy, it was decided to have nothing further to do with Horthy. Many Hungarian leaders now came to see Veesenmayer and said that the time had come for Germany to intervene in the Hungarian situation. So German movements, prepared well in advance by the military and police, were begun under General von Greiffenberg and SS/Obergruppenfuehrer Winkelmann. The order for action was given at 6 A.M. on October 16. Only the radio was seized on October 15, in order to prevent any further demoralization of the Hungarian people and troops.

On the evening of October 15, about 8 P.M., Lakatos telephoned Veesenmayer saying that he and Foreign Minister Henyey [Gusztáv Hennyey] would come to see him within half an hour. Lakatos had been surprised at Horthy's statement, and promised to do everything to avoid trouble. Veesenmayer, still hoping to avoid conflict, nevertheless had little confidence in the ability of Lakatos to avert it. During the meeting, moreover, he had word from the military that the streets of the Castle had been mined, and that he was therefore virtually a prisoner in the Legation. Lakatos was sceptical, but found the information to be correct.

Veesenmayer then sent a message to General von Greiffenberg, who was just outside Budapest, to take action. About midnight two German officers arrived, and soon after Lakatos telephoned Veesenmayer requesting that he come to the Prime Minister's residence, which he refused to do in view of the mined streets. When the mines were moved from one of the streets, he sent Geheimrat Feine to Lakatos, and was informed that Horthy had agreed to resign under the seal and protection of the German Government, together with his family and some friends.

It was now about four o'clock in the morning of October 16. Veesenmayer tried to reach the German Foreign Office, but could not get an answer to his urgent message right away, in view of the hour. He wanted a reply as to Horthy's terms, since military action against the Castle was to start at 6 A.M., and he desired to avoid bloodshed. He then got into touch with SS Obergruppenfuehrer Bach [presumably Eric von dem Bach-Zelewski, a "crisis specialist"], who had been sent down especially for the job, and who outranked

both von Greiffenberg and Winkelmann. Veesenmayer said that there should be no shooting, in view of Horthy's offer, and Bach stated that if the Hungarians offered no resistance, there would be no shooting. Whereupon Veesenmayer (about 5.30 A.M.) Informed Lakatos of the situation, and asked him, in order to prevent bloodshed, to give the Hungarian commander the order not to resist.

About 5.40 A.M. Ribbentrop's reply, accepting the Horthy offer to resign, arrived. Bloodshed would now be avoided, and Veesenmayer showed that he was proud of his part in preventing it. When he had the Foreign Office's agreement, Veesenmayer sent Geheimrat Feine again to Lakatos to bring him back so that he could inform Horthy. Lakatos arrived about 6.50 A.M., in full uniform. Veesenmayer got into his car, and with another car following, drove standing through the streets to the castle, past the Hungarian fortifications and lines of troops, and entered the last barricades on foot. He found Horthy in full uniform, as if he had been waiting for him.

Horthy was not in good "constitution" at this time, yet not entirely "broken". He was polite, though not friendly. Veesenmayer announced that he had come to place Horthy under German "protection" and to take him and his family to Germany. Horthy was placed in a small house under German guard, and the troops were advised not to molest him in any way. Lakatos accompanied him. Horthy, now primarily concerned about his family, inquired about his wife, his daughter-in-law and small grandson. Veesenmayer later found that Horthy's wife was in the establishment of the Papal Nuncio, and sent Feine to [look] after her. Following this episode, Veesenmayer went to the home of Lakatos, through streets lined with German troops and "Tiger" tanks. He ordered the house locked up to protect it. His first great task of the day was now accomplished.

Back at the legation, somewhat after seven o'clock, Veesenmayer found the house full of people, for the day before he had given help to some members of the Opposition who were anxious about their personal safety. Altogether there were about twenty or thirty people present, among them Imredy, Szalasi and Bardossy. Veesenmayer's wife provided coffee and cakes for them. Rahn had brought Szalasi there in Rekowski's diplomatic uniform, since they were afraid that he might be "spotted".

After breakfast, about ten o'clock, Veesenmayer went to see Horthy again in order to take Lakatos to talk with him. He said there was now no way to go back and Horthy would have to resign. Horthy admitted to him that he had been at fault in his contacts with the enemy. Horthy also agreed that Lakatos should resign and that Szalasi should become Premier, but on the condition that his son should be allowed to join his family on the way to Germany. Veesenmayer agreed to this, but said he would have to report it to the Foreign Office. He left Horthy about 11 A.M.

Back in the Legation, Veesenmayer saw Rahn and asked him to inquire by telephone whether Ribbentrop would agree to send Horthy's son with the family. Rahn obtained Ribbentrop's consent. Veesenmayer then told Horthy in

the presence of Rahn and Lakatos that when the situation had cleared up, Horthy's son would be allowed to join his family. Veesenmayer had carried this through as a point of honour.

Yet when all was over and Horthy had been brought to Waldbichel near Munich, the son had not yet joined the family. Learning of this about fifteen days later, Veesenmayer telegraphed Ribbentrop, pointing out that this placed him in an impossible position. He received no reply, so he wrote a letter to the Fuehrer, but heard in November from Doernberg that the Fuehrer had learned that the son had been implicated in the negotiations with the Allies, and refused to release him. That closed the matter. [Editor's note: Miklós Horthy Jr. was reunited with his father and family only after the war.]

The Szalasi Government, October 16 - May 1945

Szalasi visited Horthy in the morning of October 16, but had a rather unhappy interview, in view of Horthy's hatred of the man. Later in the morning, however, Horthy signed a statement in the presence of Veesenmayer and Lakatos, stipulating that he had resigned as Regent without force, and had agreed that Szalasi should be the new Premier of Hungary. He remarked that Szalasi was not his man, but he knew of no other who would take the responsibility at that time. But Horthy was now thinking only of his family and their safety, without any real thought for the country, according to Veesenmayer, who had lost all respect for the old man.

About five or six o'clock in the evening of October 16, Rahn and Veesenmayer began a series of meetings with Szalasi, Jurcek, Raynics, Imredy and Pallfy, together with other leaders of the Nationalist bloc, to discuss the formation for a new government which Veesenmayer wanted to [be] constituted as soon as possible in order to put a stop to the confusion and looting which had been prevalent for the last two days. Veesenmayer's aim was to avoid a 100% Szalasi government, in the end the new regime was made up of about one-half Szalasi men and one-half men from the Nationalist bloc. The government was formally constituted on the morning of October 17, with Szalasi as Premier. Horthy and his family were sent off in the company of Geheimrat Feine to exile and imprisonment in Germany.

The Szalasi government had "good will" but functioned only as the military situation permitted, which was now nearly hopeless; all that happened was "purely relative". Indeed, it was like a pot with twelve holes, Veesenmayer explained, with only ten fingers to stop the leaks. Szalasi tried to do his best, and insisted on acting "constitutionally". Not until November, for example, was he chosen as Regent in succession to Horthy. At about the same time a new Regency Council was chosen, composed of Raynics, Beragffy [Generál Károly Beregfy], and a jurist.

About December 4 or 5, 1944, Szalasi went to Berlin in the company of Veesenmayer and General von Greiffenberg, who met Szalasi at Hag[y]eshalom, on the German-Hungarian frontier. Shortly after their arrival Szalasi paid a courtesy call in Ribbentrop and then talked with the Fuehrer about the military situation in the presence of Greiffenberg and [Field Marshal Wilhelm] Keitel [Chief of Staff of the OKW]. Nothing of any significance took place at this meeting.

After the visit, the party returned to Hungary. The Hungarian Government, meanwhile, had been evacuated from Budapest, and the German legation was scattered about in order to keep in contact with the various agencies it had to deal with.... But it was impossible to carry on consistently or intelligently — there was no gasoline, no train service, no telephone or telegraph communications. Veesenmayer's intelligence agent, Haller, was in the hospital, but in any case there was nothing for him to do. It was now purely a military, not a political problem.

At the end of March 1945 Veesenmayer left Hungary and went to Semmering for two or three days; then, because the Russians were coming closer, to Salzburg, where Szalasi also remained for a while.... In his last discussion with Veesenmayer, Szalasi informed him that he proposed to go to Werten to surrender to the British. Warned, however, that he might fall into the hands of the Russians, he remained at Werten, and was married in the interval! Veesenmayer finally surrendered to the American forces about sixty kilometres from Salzburg, on May 14, 1945.

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Miklós Horthy and the Allies, 1945-1946: Two Documents

Thomas Sakmyster

Few personal letters of Admiral Miklós Horthy, the Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944, have survived as historical evidence. Horthy was apparently not in the habit of writing personal letters, and such letters of this type that he did write did not survive the chaotic conditions in Budapest at the end of World War II. Yet, curiously, Admiral Horthy was a very prolific contributor to a more formal kind of correspondence: private letters addressed to heads of state, statesmen, and other prominent leaders. During his twenty-four year tenure as Regent, Miklós Horthy addressed such letters, which typically expressed his strongly held and often idiosyncratic views on Hungarian and world problems, to Benito Mussolini, King Edward VIII of England, Neville Chamberlain, Pope Pius XII, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and others.[1] From 1936 to 1944 he dispatched numerous such letters to the Führer, most of them handwritten and composed in a quaint, somewhat archaic German. Certainly no other European statesman deemed it proper or desirable to address Hitler in such a direct, personal way, even offering him advice on strategic issues and chiding him for his policy errors.[2]

Admiral Horthy's predilection for such letters persisted after his forced resignation in October, 1944 and the devastating defeat of Hungary in the war. Just before his resignation, Horthy yielded to strong German pressure and appointed as Prime Minister Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the radical right-wing Hungarist movement. Horthy regarded Szálasi as a vulgar demagogue and a completely muddled thinker, and had until the German occupation of Hungary in March, 1944 refused numerous requests of Szálasi for an audience. As late as October 16 Horthy told Szálasi to his face that he was the last man in Hungary he would wish to appoint as prime minister. Horthy yielded to the Germans on October 16 only when the life of his only son, Miklós Jr., was threatened. Even then he signed the proclamation under protest, observing that the action was illegal and unconstitutional.

Admiral Horthy spent the last months of World War II in German custody in Bavaria, where, in April, 1945, he was liberated by American troops.[3]

To his chagrin, however, Miklós Horthy remained a prisoner of the American Army at various locations in Europe for more than a year, as the question was debated whether he was to be put on trial as a war criminal. The new Yugoslav government under Marshal Tito was vigorously pressing the case against the Hungarian Regent, arguing that he had been an accomplice of Hitler in the unprovoked attack on Yugoslavia in April, 1941, and was responsible for atrocities committed by Hungarian troops near Újvidék (Novisad) in 1942.

Reunited with his family, Admiral Horthy argued his case in a series of letters written between April, 1945 and May, 1946. His wife, daughter-in-law, and son (who returned from the concentration camp in Mauthausen only in 1946) no doubt assisted the 77 year old Horthy, but the sentiments expressed in these letters are clearly those of the former Regent, for they echo ideas and arguments to be found frequently in his pre-1945 conversations and correspondence. All the letters were written in English, a language Horthy had learned as a young naval officer but used only rarely during his regency. He had a good command of the language, but his style at times is somewhat awkward and his choice of words sometimes confusing. Short letters were sent to Winston Churchill, King George VI, and, perhaps, Stalin.[4] More substantial letters, in which Horthy tried to exonerate himself from charges of war crimes and to plead Hungary's case at the planned peace conference, are those of May 19, 1945 to President Harry Truman,[5] and of April 19, 1946 to Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary of the British government.[6] These are published here for the first time.

What is perhaps most striking about these letters is the apparent sincerity with which Admiral Horthy disclaimed all personal responsibility for Hungary's cooperation with Nazi Germany and for any atrocities committed by Hungarian troops or gendarmerie during World War II. Contemporary observers and many later historians branded Hungary as Hitler's "last ally" and ascribed a good deal of the responsibility for the spread of anti-Semitism to Admiral Horthy, who after all had served as head of state right up to October, 1944. In these letters, however, Horthy insists that he writes with a "clear conscience" because he had never sympathized with the "German party-system" and had always favoured close ties with the Anglo-Saxon world. He insists that he was literally forced to cooperate in a reluctant way with Nazi Germany because the West had failed to see the importance of reconstituting Hungary in its historic frontiers. Even so, that Hungary ended up as Hitler's ally Horthy attributes to the evil machinations of men like László Bárdossy and the "Schwabian" (or German-Hungarian) generals, who were dazzled by Nazi Germany and thwarted his policies.

Horthy offers (especially in the letter to Truman) a long but one-sided account of the German occupation of Hungary in March, 1944. He glosses over the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz, mentioning only his last-minute success in protecting the Jewish community of Budapest. Indeed, one of the major omissions in both letters is a recognition of the anti-Semitism that pervaded society and government in the Horthy era. Horthy had often privately boasted that he had been the first European statesman to take action against the

Jews (a reference to the numerus clausus of 1920), but in 1945 and 1946 he wisely refrained from reminding others of the less praiseworthy elements of his tenure as Regent.

One of Horthy's major objectives in writing these letters was clearly to present his country's case at the peace conference that everyone assumed was imminent. Remarkably, Horthy asserts that he is still Hungary's legal head of state, because his resignation had occurred under German pressure and in violation of Hungarian law. He casts aspersions on the post-war government in Hungary, suggesting that "some of its members are not even Hungarian but Soviet subjects." Above all, Horthy was intent on persuading the British and American governments that Hungary had been unfairly treated after World War I and that it would be foolish, even criminal, to restore the provisions of the hated Treaty of Trianon.

Horthy repeats here all the myths and familiar arguments that had been mainstays of the interwar campaign intended to gain "Justice for Hungary." The old Hungary, with its "1000 year frontiers," had protected Western civilization against the Mongols and Turks. Contrary to those who tried to defame his country, Hungary had never mistreated its national minorities: Slovaks, Germans, and others could rise to the highest positions of the land. Just as Count Tisza had opposed Austria-Hungary's entry into World War I, he as Regent had not favoured Hungary's declaration of war on Soviet Russia in 1941, but was tricked into it by Bárdossy.

A major thrust of both letters is the argument that Hungary represented the most trustworthy ally of the Anglo-Saxon powers in East Central Europe. Horthy attempts to play on anti-Communist sentiments by asserting that the "ideas and methods of bolshevism are just as strange to the Hungarian people as those of National Socialism have been." He makes disparaging comments about Hungary's neighbours. Romania, he suggests, has no historical claim to Transylvania (he claims to own a map from 1696 proving this) and is a back-stabbing, opportunistic country, witness the last-minute defection of Romania in the closing days of the war. The West, by contrast, could rely completely on Hungary. Once it had been restored to its traditional frontiers, with a common frontier with Poland in the North and access to the sea in the South, Hungary would be a force for stability in Europe.

No where in these letters does Admiral Horthy show any awareness of the forces that had already swept away the traditional order in Hungary. He seemed unaware of the sharp move to the Left that was occurring throughout Europe. Thus, he does not try to win the favour of the Anglo-Saxon powers by extolling democratic procedures or acknowledging any weaknesses of the interwar Hungarian social system or government. He fails to see that advocacy of certain progressive measures (such as land reform or cooperation with peasant and workers parties) might have been a useful tactic when pleading his case with the Western Democracies.

None of the letters Admiral Horthy wrote to various officials in 1945 and 1946 had any effect on the subsequent course of events. There is no evidence that anyone on the American side, including President Truman, even read Horthy's letter. The same could be said on the British side, where the only serious consideration of the letter to Bevin was that given by C. A. Macartney, who at the time was the Hungarian specialist in the Foreign Office. But Macartney, who in general had analyzed Hungarian affairs in a balanced and even somewhat sympathetic manner,[7] concluded, with a bit of understatement, that the "Regent seems to be somewhat out of touch with modern developments...."[8]

Admiral Horthy was not, in the end, brought to trial as a war criminal, although he was called as a witness to the Nuremberg Trials. The decision not to prosecute Horthy was made by the Allies independently of any arguments presented by Horthy. Ironically, the balance was tipped by Joseph Stalin, who advised against prosecution of the man who had been one of Europe's most adamant and passionate anti-Communists. Horthy, Stalin suggested, was an "old man" who had at least tried, albeit clumsily, to make an armistice with Russia. He should not be considered a war criminal and should be allowed to live in peace in the West.[9]

Thus, as historical evidence, these two documents represent Miklós Horthy's last, somewhat pathetic, intervention in European affairs. What is perhaps most notable about the contents of the letters is that the views he expresses and the arguments he employs are virtually unchanged from those to be found in his conversations and memorandums as far back as 1920. The myths that he so fervently embraced about Hungarian history and the role of his country in European affairs were not altered by the traumatic events of his twenty-four year long regency.

NOTES

[1]For details on these letters, see Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1994), pp. 186-87, 189-91, 217-19, 263-64, 303-04, 367-68, 451.

[2]See, for example, Horthy's letters to Hitler in the era of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, when the Regent attempted to convince Hitler of the perils of cooperation with the USSR. Miklós Szinai and László Szücs, eds., *The Confidential Papers of Admiral Horthy* (Budapest: Corvina, 1965), pp. 126-28, 130-32.

[3]For the best treatment of Horthy's life in exile, see Péter Gosztony, *Miklós von Horthy. Admiral und Reichsverweser* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1973), pp. 112-15.

[4]In mid-June, 1945 during an interrogation by U.S. Army intelligence officers, Horthy mentioned that he had drafted letters to Eisenhower and Stalin. Military Intelligence Records, RG332, ETO, G2 section, CCPWE, 321X-P12, National Archives (hereafter NA). No letter of Horthy to Stalin in 1945 has surfaced from Soviet archives.

[5]Records of the Department of State, RG59, 864.00/7-545, NA. The letter, as Horthy explains in his preliminary remarks, was intended for President Roosevelt, so it is clear that he had been working on it for several months prior to its dispatch.

[6]Records of the Foreign Office of the United Kingdom, FO371, vol. 59016. R7683/509/21, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO).

[7]See, for example, his comments attached to a record of his interrogations of Horthy: FO371, vol. 51043, C688/688/21, PRO.

[8]FO371, vol. 59016, R7683/509/21, PRO.

[9]Sakmyster, pp. 381-82. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Eva Haraszti-Taylor, "Why was Admiral Horthy not Considered a War Criminal?" *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 30, no. 113 (1988), pp. 133-43.

Horthy's Letters

NOTE: The documents have been edited to correct typographical, but not grammatical, errors.

A. Miklós Horthy's letter to President Harry Truman dated May 19, 1945. Horthy prefaced the typed part of the letter with a brief handwritten note in two parts in which he complained that he was being treated like a "common criminal" and that he was unable to exercise his leadership "when the future of my country will be decided for centuries."

Excellency!

I beg to grant me a short half an hour of your very precious time in reading the following lines. As the fate of many generations has to be decided now and everybody's ardent desire is a longlasting and just peace. I take the liberty to tell your excellency the truth and only the truth about what hard and unfortunate circumstances our nation had to deal with. I feel this being my duty because in my opinion the reason of Hungary's catastrophe at the peace treaty of 1919 was that our situation has been falsely exhibited, without giving us a chance to remonstrate and to prove the truth. Quoting Poincaré's memoirs: "Clemenceau who hated the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (without knowing our country or nation) was most willing to please the claims of Serbia, Bohemia and Rumania."

After the first world war it was much discussed who was guilty of its outbreak. It is proven that the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza opposed war in the Crown Council. Nevertheless our nation has percentually the heaviest losses and our country lost two thirds of its over a thousand year old territorial possessions. There is not a single nation in this part of Europe that did not fight

out of geographical reasons in one or both wars against the Entente. Czechs, Slovaks, Roumanians, Bulgars, Serbs, Austrians. And Hungary, who did absolutely the same, lost territory to them and this without plebiscite. An armed Austro-Hungary, with Switzerland, and if possible a trustworthy Rumania on its flank, would have been strong enough to declare a line of neutrality along Middle Europe. Mr. Clemenceau's disarmed and one-third Hungary surrounded by enemies was absolutely unable to do this.

Our ancestors were liberal enough not to oppose any immigration and strange nationalities entered because they found more safety, better administration, and better conditions of life. If it had not been so, they would have returned. It is not true that they were oppressed, which is proven by the fact that they kept their mother language throughout centuries, even in villages few miles from the capital. Every subject had the same right to achieve any position, if qualified for. Wekerle, of German origin was three times Prime Minister, Roeder Minister of War, Werth Chief of Staff and during the first World War the highest rank in the State, the Prince Primate was occupied by Cardinal Czernoch, son of a poor Slovak peasant. To a thousand families of Serbs we gave permission around 1400 to enter the country evading Turkish terror. We had most of the Germans settled by the absolutist Austrian government on Hungarian Crown Territory, most fertile ground.

The Rumanian infiltration was a slow one. Their propaganda wants to make the world believe that they were aborigin[al]s of Transylvania, but the truth is that before occupation of the country by Hungarians, the Rumanian Race was nonexistent. There is a map in my possession of the year 1696 drawn up by a deputy sent by the King of France to the Prince-Regent of Transylvania. On this map is written: "En des Saxons, des Moldaves et des Valaques, dont les deux derniers possedent la moindre partie et sont peux connus."

In the last 50 years the Rumanian government opened a branch of the Albina bank in the capital of Transylvania with the instruction to buy all available land in the country and settle Rumanian peasants on it. The Rumanian State in its 80 year existence betrayed all its allies. They spread the tale that half of Transylvania was returned to Hungary as a gift of Hitler, whereas the truth is that not being able to stand any longer the lasting official provocations, as well as the ill treatment and ruin of our Transylvanian compatriots, we made arrangements to enter the country. As the majority of their troops were deep in Russian territory engaged in a war of conquest, they repeatedly asked Hitler for arbitration, to divide Transylvania. We consented unwillingly but only to spare blood and to save at least part of our compatriots as soon as possible of further ill treatment.

At the end of the year 1918 all troops returning from the front were disarmed on orders of the revolutionary government. The Peace Treaty of Trianon forbade us to hold an army, to produce armament, to drill officers and soldiers. The Little Entente, that kept an army of about 3 million well armed men, took good care to keep us in this state, to be able to enjoy the possession

of its newly acquired territories without trouble. In this second World War, unarmed, we did not have the possibility to remain neutral, because of our geographical position and on account of Hungary being of great importance to Germany. All transport of troops and war material to Rumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece, and all the very important transports of Rumanian oil had to pass our country. There is no question about it, that we would have been immediately invaded, had we declared neutrality with not a single gun in our possession. Partisan fighting was absolutely impossible on a dead flat and treeless country. We did not have any aspirations outside our old borders, even when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia, we refused to accept it as part of Hungary. Our only ambitions were to keep the penetration of Bolshevism out of our country whose doctrines are rejected by our population. All armament we got from Germany were conscientiously paid, whereas most products delivered by us remained unpaid, so that their debts amounted to several millions.

Under the pretext to discuss the possibilities of recalling our four divisions standing in Russia, which I during many months urgently claimed by letters and through sending to Headquarters by turns the Minister of War and the Chief of Staff in vain, I was invited to Hitler, which invitation I accepted for this important reason. On my arrival, Hungary was unexpectedly invaded and occupied by German troops under the pretext that our intention was to join the enemy. As I was told this I protested against this unheard of action and wanted to leave at once, but they prevented my returning home to have time to finish the occupation. We hardly had any troops at home and so they could not think of resistance, especially because of my absence. Our most valuable leading men were arrested, they collected the Jews of the country and transported them under most inhuman conditions to Germany, requisitioned everything, bought up all the stocks with our money and took all our animals for breeding. I kept my position only on Hitler's binding promise that if I nominate a government he can trust, all troops will be withdrawn from Hungary and so our sovereignty restored. I appointed our Minister in Berlin who was officer as Prime Minister and though they declared themselves satisfied, never kept their promise.

Besides my remaining made the keeping of parliamentary form possible. As the Germans kept strong forces in and around our capitals to control us and not on the Carpathians, belonging to the Rumanians, the Russian and Rumanian army invaded Transylvania. Seeing the total annihilation of my country inevitable I asked for the German Minister and told him my decision to request armistice. At the same time I published an explaining manifesto, through wireless to the nation. I was convinced that this action meant my arrest sooner or later. The Germans were too ready to act and got immediately hold of the radio and telephone central, so that I was incapable of giving further orders. The Germans had about 600 tanks in town and as resistance was hopeless, I did not want to sacrifice the bodyguards. So the Royal Palace was occupied and plundered. I was taken to Bavaria, where I was in captivity till the American troops came. Hitler gave orders to shoot my whole family. My only remaining

son was lured into a trap and taken to Germany on a plane. He was carried to the concentration camp of Mauthausen near Linz (a camp of the worst reputation, where numbers of Hungarians were kept), and I still do not know if he is dead or alive. The only reason they had against him was his Nazi hatred, that he never had intercourse with any of them and foresaw the result of this war at its beginning. The man who was appointed Prime Minister by the German Minister immediately after my arrest, called Szálasi, an Armenian who as major lost his rank and was later sentenced by court of Justice for 4 years imprisonment. He was a National Socialist who founded a small party of the worst elements, mostly of strange origin, with the help of German funds. Getting to power with German help, his unwholesome function luckily did not last long.

Only a just peace can be of duration. Therefore I urgently ask to be listened to at the Peace Conference. We will answer all questions correctly, as we always did. Our ardent desire would be to get rid of the Hungarian subjects of German nationality, who behaved most ungratefully. All other nationalities (with the exception of the Slovaks) could also be exchanged with Hungarians. Never could there be a better opportunity for this, because all the neighbouring countries had severe losses and have need of their own people. For instance there were in 1919, 378,000 Serbian minorities living on the part of Hungary given to them and they lost throughout the last war manifold of this number. This would also help to accomplish friendly terms between us, which has always been my sincere and often officially expressed desire. Despair was great after Trianon, because not only had we lost two thirds of our country, everywhere with Hungarian majority, with historical towns where universities, theatres, etc. were all Hungarian culture, where minorities were mostly peasants on low standard of life, but the main reason of despair was that the remaining country was incapable of living, having lost all mines and woods and left without a grain of salt. We also lost our only port Fiume and it is impossible for a nation to live without being able to reach the sea. If all the forests of our lost mountains, sources of our rivers, would have been cut down (which devastation the new proprietors against the prohibition of the international Danube-Committee already begun) nothing would have been left but stony hills, with yearly inundation of our agricultural country in consequence. This nation left alone in defense of European culture, fought throughout centuries its wars against Mongols, Tartars, Turks, always weakened and nevertheless not giving up its duty, deserves a better lot. Everybody who knows our nation can see that a Hungarian as Minister never enriched himself. Corrupt people cannot get along in our atmosphere. I beg to lend an ear to our destiny and excuse my long letter.

Wishing your country lasting happiness and success in its great work for the world's welfare, I am yours sincerely

Adm. Horthy

Belgium, 19/V 1945

[handwritten postscript] Excuse the form!

B. Horthy's letter to Ernest Bevin, April 14, 1946

Your Excellency,

The preparations for the Peace Treaties having begun and the date of the Peace Conference approaching, I have to call the attention of your Excellency to Hungary and to a few problems concerning our country.

I feel it my duty to do this as I still have to consider myself the Regent of Hungary, having been unanimously elected in 1920 by the Hungarian Parliament the members of which were called together on basis of a democratic election representing the free will of the nation.

In order to refute such opinions that I, having resigned have not the right to appeal in the name of my nation anymore, I have to declare that in spite of the fact — when after the German occupation and my arrest by the Germans in middle of October 1944, after Ferenc Szálasi and his Government was nominated by the Germans, my resignation was proclaimed by way of advertisements, the press and the radio — I legally did not resign. My so called resignation was the result of a physical and moral pressure. I was forced to sign the document put before me facing the tommy-guns of SS soldiers and the German Minister in the presence of Prime Minister Lakatos giving me his word of honour, that in case I sign the resignation my only living child Nicholas Horthy, Jr. will avoid execution. I gave my signature fully conscious of all these circumstances and decidedly declaring its invalidity. According to the Hungarian Law then in force my resignation would have been valid only in case it had taken place according to the formalities prescribed by the Law. My signature therefore was invalid in any case, even if I had not been forced to give it.

What makes it all the more my duty to explain the situation of Hungary is that in consequence of the occupation the present government does not represent the will of the nation, and is not master of its decisions and acts. So at the coming Peace Conference it is hindered in the uninfluenced and free representation of the interests of the country for — as far as I know — some of its members are not even Hungarian but Soviet subjects.

And finally it is my rightful duty to raise my word in the interest of my country now, for I may state before the tribunal of history with a quiet conscience that I am one of the majority of those Hungarians who never sided with the German party-system, with its aims and methods, have done everything in my power to save my people from the horrors of this war and tried even during the war to get into contact with the Anglo-Saxon powers and to make the difficult situation of Hungary clear to them. I may declare with a clear conscience that Hungary was dragged into the war under the irresistible pressure of the Germans and in consequence of the activity of a responsible statesman who has since then been executed as a war-criminal. I firmly protested against the German occupation of our country and qualified it before Hitler and his statesmen as an unheard of atrocity and did all in my power to have the German

troops withdrawn from the country as it had been promised. In most respects my endeavors remained unsuccessful. So, e.g. troops sent out to the Russian front with the purpose to defend the frontier or maintain order were also used by the German High Command — in opposition to our agreement — in the front-lines.

The final demarcation of the Hungarian frontiers is a problem of great significance and importance from the point of view of World-Peace and the great principles that are to secure this Peace. Should the Peace Treaties decide the frontiers of Hungary to be the same as what the Peace Treaty of Trianon had decided upon — inspite of the fact that according to the opinion of distinguished Anglo-Saxon circles that was wrong and unjust, and was the source of newer frictions and troubles — it would again be the hothouse of possibilities extremely threatening a lasting World-Peace.

I would shortly like to deal with the question, whether — as a retaliation, or a punishment or on the basis of the principle of equal treatment — the dispositions concerning Hungary are to be stricter than those concerning the other neighbouring countries.

I should like to point to the fact, that with the exception of Yugoslavia, all our other neighbors who demand territory and partly even recompensation from us, have, as may be proved, more help to their German friends against the Allied Nations, than we did. In order to prove this I will relate the following facts:

Slovakia took part in the war against the Allied Nations with a relatively uncomparably larger force and to a much greater extent then we did. Her territory, her material and morale, military and financial, economical and political values were entirely in the service of the German interests. German troops drew up through Slovakia in the warfare against the Russians.

Bohemia surrendered to Hitler completely. Her factories and workmen worked for the Germans, her economy served the German war-interests and what's more she even increased the German's war industry by new factories. There was peace and order in the country all the time, there were no signs of any serious oppositions. Her army which had been made large and strong by the Allies let the German troops of occupation in without resistance.

Roumania was among the so called satellites the country which turned into the most complete Fascistic and Nazi state. Her significant forces were entirely drawn up and cast in against the Soviet. She incorporated large Russian territories and immediately introduced Roumanian administration. She gave her entire petroleum production as well as her agricultural products to the Germans. And all this was done by the Roumania which ever since the last War has been materially and morally supported by America, England, and France. And Roumania was not in the mouth of Hitler's empire, as we were, they had no common frontiers.

Yugoslavia, her army being well equipped by the Allies and the country being in a firstrate strategical situation, was in the position to fight a partisan

war against the Germans. In spite of the strong German pressure I was not willing to give Hungarian troops in the war against Yugoslavia and even after the towns of Szeged and Pécs had been bombed by them and the numerous Hungarian population of the Bácska had been molested by the Yugoslavs we occupied only the former Hungarian territory. On the basis of our historical rights, the majority of the Hungarian population, this territory may rightfully be claimed as ours.

It was an unprecedented injustice to give Burgenland to Austria after the last war. A conquered nation had been given a piece of land — and what's more, a piece of land which it had never claimed. As Austria joined Germany with great enthusiasm during this War fought with all her political and military strength for Nazism, I cannot understand, why and for what reason Hungary should be more guilty in the eyes of the Allies.

I have to call your Excellency's attention to the fact that Hungary is in a key position in the South-Eastern part of Europe. Hungary is wedged in between the mass of Germans breaking forth from the West towards the East and the Slavs breaking forth from the East to the South-West, and at the same time forms a wedge between the Northern and Southern Slavs. Hungary shuts down the Balkan peninsula to the North. The best passable continental roads and navigable rivers in this direction lead through Hungarian territory. Consequently Hungary is the defending bulwark of the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, that part which from the point of view of world economy is of great importance. For this reason she falls in the way of conquering nations who endeavour to expand their power towards the South-East and the West. It was Hungary who in the XIII. century held up the Mongols who broke into Europe and it was Hungary who in the XV. century defended the West against the plundering of the Turks with her own body. This is just how she fell into the line of expansion of some nations of our present age and it was for this reason that she was compelled to become a battlefield.

Hungary is in no racial or linguistic relationship either with the German or Slav people. The Hungarian folk does not understand their languages; its morals, customs, and culture are radically different. Hungary has for many centuries firmly withstood the endeavours for being conquered or incorporated by these nations.

Hungary, but especially the old Hungary with its 1000 years old frontiers, encircled by the Carpathians is exceedingly rich in agricultural products, minerals, and raw material, and these values are far from being completely used up. The up-to-date improvement of Hungarian economical life and the excavation of her treasures will be the task of that great power which draws Hungary into its sphere of interest. And this has got to be a Western great power, for the geographical position of the country, the vast chain of mountains forming a barrier towards the North and the East, the psychological structure of the people, as well as its cultural endeavours of the past centuries necessitate our orientation towards the West.

On deciding the problem as to which great power Hungary should turn to for support and friendship, there is but one logical solution. Hungary has none else but the Anglo-Saxon powers to turn to. This would be of political and economical advantage to the Anglo-Saxon powers, as in this way they could secure peace on the Balkan peninsula and the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean.

A Polish-Hungarian bloc with a common frontier would secure the peace in this part of Europe. Hungary has lived in close friendship with Poland for centuries and the two states have never fought a war with each other. We gave evidence of this friendly feeling at the beginning of the War, when we denied the Germans the permission to pass through our country against Poland, and an order was given for the bridges to be blown up in case the Germans tried carrying through their intention by force. During the war we gave large masses of Polish refugees a hearty welcome, helped and supported them in their further flight towards the West.

Besides the territories that had belonged to us for over a thousand years, Hungary has no other territorial aspirations. Could Hungary find support with a great power, which has no intention of oppressing her, she would become released of the immediate pressure of her political problems and could produce great results in economical life.

In the twenties of this century many efforts were made to gain the friendship of Britain and these efforts did not remain resultless as quite a number of the members of the English Parliament raised their word in the interest of Hungary. But British official circles — probably under the influence of the loud propaganda of the Small Entente based often on fictive facts — did not welcome our approaches and this is how our unfortunate country came to get under German influence again. Germany was only too happy to grasp the opportunity of making this valuable territory one of the bases of her political and economical aspirations. We were not able to defend ourselves against these endeavours, as according to the Peace Treaty of Trianon we were allowed only an army of 30,000 men for the purpose of maintaining order, and this an army lacking modern artillery, airforce, and armoured divisions.

The ideas and methods of bolshevism are just as strange to the Hungarian people as those of National Socialism have been.

Should my word be granted understanding and should the Anglo-Saxon powers draw Hungary into their sphere of interest, it is for the good of both parties for Hungary to become politically and economically as strong as possible.

The interests of the Anglo-Saxon powers demand therefore, that Hungary should not remain the mutilated country it was made by Trianon, but that it should regain its 1000 years old boundaries which alone form a natural line of defence towards the North and the East. In the interest of a strong Hungary and a healthy Hungarian economical life it is of essential importance to give her back Fiume, the port of which was built by our country at a great expense.

Firmly convinced that the above mentioned facts hold ground not only from the point of view of a sovereign who has ruled for 24 years and who is anxious about his country, but also from the point of view of right and justice which are to maintain World Peace, I repeatedly ask your Excellency and your Government to take these problems into serious consideration.

Sincerely Yours,
Horthy

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Review Article

The Admiral on Horseback: A New Biography of Miklós Horthy

Mario D. Fenyo

Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs; dist., New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Pp. x, 476, illustrations. Price: US $59.00.

Although I learnt long ago that there is no such thing as the definitive work, on any subject, Sakmyster's prize-winning biography of Admiral Miklós Horthy comes close to being just that.

Hungary's regent — the admiral without a navy, head of a monarchy without a ruler — has not been totally overlooked. Apart from his own memoirs (originally published as *Ein Leben für Ungarn*), the regent (or governor) of Hungary has been the subject of a number of works, ranging from eulogies published in Hungary and Germany while Horthy was still in power, to several shorter or longer denunciations of his regime and himself published during the next regime, and even a short biography by Péter Gosztony. But, as István Deák noted not long ago, there has been "an astounding lack of [comprehensive] biographies" of Hungary's admiral on horseback.[1]

Sakmyster's biography is comprehensive and authoritative. It is comprehensive, since it describes and analyzes the actions taken by Horthy when these actions really mattered, that is, as a leader of the counter-revolution in 1918-1920, and while he held office, between 1920 and 1944. To what extent holding office meant taking matters in charge is one of the basic issues the author tackles; the answer, of course, varies from decade to decade, from year to year. Generally, we are told, Horthy remained a ceremonial head of state between 1920-1931, more "pro-active" thereafter.

Sakmyster's treatment of his subject appears authoritative because it is utterly objective. Indeed, it is rather doubtful that anyone could have come up with a more objective treatment. Hungarian historians, sophisticated as they may be, cannot dodge the fact that sympathy or antipathy toward Admiral Horthy is still, even today, a litmus test of political allegiance. Sakmyster, however, is not

a person born in Hungary, and is not a native speaker of Magyar but is among a handful of scholars who have attempted to and succeeded in mastering the intricacies of this most daunting language. The only historian with similar qualifications who has written about the period in detail was the Scotsman Carlyle Aylmer Macartney whose work, however, falls short of being impartial: while he wrote contemporary oral history, largely on the basis of interviews, almost all his informants happened to be royalists or members of the Hungarian establishment during the Horthy regime.

Moreover, as far as I know, the author is not a native of, or spokesman for, some other East-Central European land. After all, among the most negative assessments of Horthy and his regime we find the works of those scholars, and others, who have adopted a Czech, Slovak, Serbian, or Romanian point of view. Perhaps their bias is excusable, for they have responded to Horthy in kind; he was, indeed, a biased person in many ways, something of an upper-class (actually, gentry class) Archie Bunker. Once the Treaty of Trianon went into effect, depriving historic Hungary of two-thirds of its territory and half of its population, he did not hesitate to voice his hatred toward Hungary's neighbours, albeit reserving his strongest contempt for Communists and "Galician" (i.e., poor) Jews. While we must understand why the assessment of Horthy by some of Hungary's neighbours is biased, the fact of bias remains.

How do I know that Sakmyster's work is "objective?" For one thing, his biography gives Horthy credit where credit is due, yet does not mince word in denouncing the man for his many weaknesses, beginning with the fact that he was not the right person to head a small country, wedged between two aggressive great powers and surrounded by smaller foes. For another thing, Sakmyster's assessment pretty much jibes with what one may read in my father's diary from 1944, the year of the German occupation, which the author has not read, or at least does not refer to. From his place of hiding, my father described Horthy, with unconcealed bitterness, as the wrong man at the wrong time: "chance has placed into the hands of this intellectually and morally mediocre person the fate of a country."

Although this work will most likely prove the definitive biography, this is not to say that Sakmyster has told us everything we may wish to know about Horthy. Some personal, non-political details might have been added to clarify the contradictions. For instance, was Horthy a man of "sterling honesty" as the British ambassador believed (p. 152), agreeing with what seems to be Horthy's image of himself, or a "cunning rogue" as Hitler stated at one point (p. 309)? Sakmyster own assessment seems to be that Horthy was "never an adroit liar" (p. 299). In fact, he refers to "Horthy's prevarications" (p. 54) at an early stage in his regency, good enough to pull the wool over the eyes of Western diplomats.

Was Horthy a persecutor or a protector of the Jewish population of his country? Indeed, Horthy's ambiguous (to put it kindly) attitude towards Jews is a central theme of Sakmyster's work. Sakmyster gives us one side of this attitude when discussing the mass deportations during the first two months of the

German occupation: "like Pontius Pilate, Horthy ... hoped to wash his hands of this distasteful matter" (p. 342). But then, as the author does not fail to note, Horthy did finally put his foot down. Having received information that the deportations were not for the sake of supplying Germany with needed manpower, Horthy did decide to challenge the occupation force. As the Einsatzkommandos, and especially their extreme right-wing Hungarian assistants, were all set to deport the Jews from the ghetto and "yellow-houses" of Budapest, he ordered loyal troops to surround and occupy his own capital city. It was an opportune moment, for the Nazi German leadership had its hands full with the Allies, who had just landed in Normandy. Perhaps to his own surprise, Horthy's sudden determination had the intended effect, the Jewish population of Budapest was saved by the counter-coup — at least for the time being.

Did Miklós Horthy have the intellectual qualifications to lead a nation? According to the British ambassador, he was of "no great cleverness" (p. 152). According to Sakmyster himself, although he spoke several languages, Horthy lacked "clarity of vision," "political acumen" (p. 60). According to Deák, however, he was no less intelligent than Maréchal Pétain of Vichy-France, or Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Clearly, there were instances when Horthy's moves may even be viewed as shrewd. In October 1921 (in the Eastern regions of Europe October is when momentous events take place) Charles Habsburg, the pretendant to the thrones of Hungary and Austria, attempted a second comeback to Hungary, this time backed by a military force. Horthy's troops fought a pitched battle on the outskirts of Budapest and the pretendant was forced to give up. Thus Horthy was able to hold on to his regency, yet somehow managed to project the image of one who is not power-hungry, but willing to give up power when the interests of the country demand it; in fact, he continued to appear as even "Kaisertreu," that is, loyal to the Habsburg family.

It may be irrelevant, but since there are a number of cryptic references to Horthy as a bridge-player and to his partners as being Jewish industrialists I, for one, would be curious to know, how good a player was he? How did the players interact around the bridge table?

A description of other traits of Horthy's character might have been helpful. Was he a man of moral and physical courage? Was he the brave man who, once wounded, remained on the deck of his flagship to direct the naval battle at Otranto? Or, do we get a more accurate impression of his character when, on the eve of the German invasion of Hungary, brow-beaten by Hitler at their last meeting in Klessheim, he was cowed into submission; and again, on October 16, 1944, when he was cowed into appointing Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the right-wing extremist Arrow-Cross movement whom he despised, as Hungary's next prime-minister?

There were extenuating circumstances; indeed, it is hard to blame Horthy for acting like a family man and a father. Already in 1942 he had lost his older son, who had volunteered as a pilot on the Eastern Front. At dawn on October 15th, when Horthy was on the verge of proclaiming the armistice he had

negotiated with the Soviet Union, his remaining son, Miklós, was lured into a trap by the SS — by Otto Skorzeny, the selfsame officer who a year earlier had led a paratrooper detachment to free Mussolini — and was kidnapped (he was rolled into an oriental rug and loaded onto an awaiting German truck which sped away with him and his kidnappers).

Indeed, some of the contradictions in Horthy's actions may be explained by circumstances of his private and family life, about which the reader might wish to know more. Circumstantial evidence suggests that some of his more admirable deeds must be credited, at least in part, to the influence and good sense of his wife and two sons.

Furthermore, it might be worth the reader's while, in order to receive a more complete picture of Hungarian history of the period, to read Horthy's biography along with the equally excellent biography of one of his prime ministers, István Bethlen, by Ignác Romsics.[3]

My final question to Thomas Sakmyster is: what prompted him to write the biography of Horthy? Would he not have derived greater satisfaction from writing the biography of someone truly admirable?

NOTES

[1]Istvan Deak, "Nikolaus von Horthy: Admiral und Reichsverweser," *Internationale Hefte*, 1995, p. 72.

[2]Miksa Fenyő, *Az elsodort ország* (Budapest: Magvető, 1986), 2nd edition, p. 43.

[3]Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874-1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Originally published as *Bethlen István: Politikai Életrajz* (Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 1991). The reader might also be interested in István Bethlen, *Bethlen István Emlékirata, 1944*, ed. Ignác Romsics (Budapest: Zrínyi Katonai Kiadó, 1988). With introductions by Ignác Romsics and Ilona Bolza.

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Part 2 (Fall, 1996)

Other Papers:

The Theatrical Grotesque: An Aesthetic Tool for Interpreting History on the Hungarian Stages in the 1960's and 1970's

Jutka Devenyi

The emergence of the grotesque on the Hungarian theatrical scene in the 1960's and 1970's could easily be seen as an aesthetic manifestation of a strategy. As Hungarian literature gradually incorporates elements of the absurd of the European avant-garde, by way of transformation, it congeals these very elements into an aesthetic coating on bad medicine. The technique, constituting an an/aesthetic for the provocation and the eventual pacification of intense and often very complex emotions, is a survival aid for the past and the present: used to help erase memories of the horrors of the war, or, under the neo-Stalinist regime, to comfortably numb the sensory system. However, in the long run, the side-effects carry serious implications. As we shall see, the grotesque transforms the desire for living into death itself.

Western audiences are usually not familiar with this typically East European anomaly.[1] Particularly in Hungary, the Magyar language's resistance to translation aggravates the basic non-convertibility of feeling and form. The most widely per-formed Hungarian playwright of the grotesque, István Örkény remains relatively unknown in the West, although *Pisti a vérzivatarban* (Pisti in the Blood Bath) was performed at the Seattle Annex Theatre in 1990. (The play focuses on Pisti, "Everyman", who is allowed to take on a series of identities in the time of an undefined political crisis only to realize that these identities have been prescribed for him in the first place.) In addition, *Macskajáték* (Catsplay) was first presented in 1976 in Minneapolis by the Guthrie Theater, prefaced by Örkény's own lecture addressing the issue of this uneasy mixture of Hungarian pleasure and pain.

The ironic disjuncture between style and subject matter, as we might define the grotesque, could equally characterize absurdism as a dramatic style, since in

its essence the absurd also positions perfectly normal characters in an abnormal situation, or, vice versa, abnormal characters in a normal situation. Both styles have their own inherent principles, which are imposed on the participating characters with unrelenting rigor. Thus the rules of the resulting dis/order might not resemble those of the world outside the stage, but they operate with the same consistency and cruelty. Aesthetically speaking, in both the grotesque and the absurd the contrast emerges between the horrible and the comic, stimulating intuitive rather than intellectual faculties. Moreover, both are strategic theatrical devices containing a host of components intended to achieve a certain end. The absurd, a dramatic form that abandons traditional devices of drama — such as meaningful dialogue, and normal characterization — aspires to awaken feelings of ambivalence and unease by frustrating the expectations of dramatic logic. The grotesque, although it also challenges traditional dramatic structures, has a different impact on its audience: it facilitates psychological release. The release is pleasant — albeit strictly temporary — as symptoms of devastating pain disappear into the rhapsody of what Charles Baudelaire, the French symbolist poet calls "absolute laughter,"

> From now on onwards I shall call the grotesque 'the absolute comic' in antithesis to the ordinary comic, which I shall call 'the significative comic'. The latter is a clearer language, and one easier for the man in the street to understand, and above all easier to analyze, its element being visibly *double* — art and the moral idea. But the absolute comic, which comes much closer to nature, emerges as a *unity* which calls for the intuition to grasp it. There is but one criterion of the grotesque, and that is laughter, immediate laughter. Whereas with the significative comic it is quite permissible to laugh a moment late — there is no argument against its validity; it all depends upon one's quickness of analysis.[2]

What seems unusual when one tries to apply Baudelaire's description to the post-war East European theatrical grotesque is that in this case, the intuition implied in the "absolute laughter" is a socially developed one. Therefore when we examine the relationship between the emergence of an aesthetic and a specific socio-political framework, fundamental dissimilarities appear between the absurd and the grotesque not merely with respect to the laughter they solicit but also in regards the context of such laughter. We can quite easily explore this context if we compare the plot structure of *The Birthday Party* (1958) by the British playwright Harold Pinter, and that of one of Örkény's most popular plays in Hungary, *Tóték* (The Toth Family, 1969).[3] We may recapitulate the rather well known series of events in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* along the following lines: Two unexpected visitors arrive in the perfectly normal life of Petey and Meg, who for some time have been providing board for Stanley, a middle age man with a somewhat ambiguous past. They intend to take Stanley away and Stanley is afraid of them. Nobody understands the situation, and Stanley is apparently terrified but

never makes any physical effort to escape the visitors, so finally they carry him away. Stanley is quite obviously broken yet shows no signs of resistance.

Now let's summarize the plot of Örkény's play, *Tóték*. Toth and his wife live a quiet life in the countryside during the time of World War II. Their son is away in the army and they are worried about him. One day the Toths receive a letter from their son informing them about his Major's visit to the region. They decide to offer the Major their hospitality for their son's benefit. The Major takes a keen interest in Toth's occupation "dobozolás", the art of making boxes out of cardboard paper. However, the Major's initial interest soon turns into an oppressive nightmare: he insists on spending every single minute of his time making boxes, constantly harassing Toth. In an attempt to escape him Toth hides in the toilet. Yet even there the Major finds him, and the Toths can hardly wait for their "guest's" departure. The day arrives and the Major leaves to catch his train at the station. The Toths are about to settle back into their lives when the Major shows up at the door and announces that he has decided to stay on for a while. Mrs. Toth takes him to the second floor and kills him.

The two situations are structurally similar. An alien visitor(s) enter into a normal situation but as the plot unfolds the arrival transforms the normalcy of the original set-up into absurdity. The character of the outsider is never revealed or framed in psychological terms (we will never know what exactly motivates the two strangers to take Stanley away, or why the Major becomes obsessed with the boxes). In fact, psychological motivations behind the force that disrupts the initial situation are left ambiguous intentionally. The difference between the two situations lies outside of the dramaturgical structure, in the definition of details and the concretization of nuances.

Time and space are left undefined in *The Birthday Party*. The identity of the organization which sent the visitors is not clarified, neither is the nature of Stanley's association with it. The circumstances are too general to locate the plot in England if we disregard the obviously Anglo-Saxon names of the characters. The play sends out signs of undefined menace, guttural fear and general unease, but the relationship between these emotions and the current socio-economic situation is at best abstract. The play thus addresses the public on an existential level, where the aforementioned qualities (worry, horror and intimidation) are universalized and treated without specifics.

In *Tóték* careful attention is paid to contextualized details. The son is conscripted into the army, that of the Hungarian military of the Second World War. Relationships are perfectly clear: Toth's son is the Major's subordinate. The reason for the Major's visit is equally obvious — he is on leave. The parents wish to please the Major because their son's fate is in his hands, and finally kill him because, despite all this, they can no longer tolerate his imposition on their lives. The situation is quite evidently based on the Hungarian context, making the identification process relatively easy for the audience. Thus, the domestication of the details of a potentially absurd plot creates the Eastern European version of the grotesque. Örkény himself addresses this point in his 1976 lecture, delivered on

the occasion of the Guthrie Theater's performance of *Catsplay*, from the point of view of a working playwright:

> We prefer to locate our dramas in time and space concretely and precisely, and start the action from the past, either from an episode taken from our history, or with a typical situation of the present. We don't feel comfortable in a vacuum, we have to touch the ground in order to gain our energies from it. I believe this is the case because — as opposed to the French and British playwrights of the absurd — we haven't lost our interest in the present and the past.[4]

On the basis of this comparison, we could say that Örkény historicizes the absurd by way of specification and contextualization. While the absurd operates on an existential level without any particularly defined framework (see for instance, Harold Pinter's *The Dumbwaiter*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, or Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*), the same plays if presented in Hungary and adapted to the Hungarian situation, will create an altogether different mode. The new aesthetic is not the consequence of fundamental changes in tone or structure but that of "domestication" by members of the audience. In semiotic terms, receivers of the code define the style of the play: a particular community makes it or breaks it. In other words, the Hungarian audience (or in fact any East European audience) will create the grotesque out of the absurd by putting it into the context of their own situation. The spectators' identifications will be based on crossing the line between horrifying vision and menacing reality.

Although both the grotesque and the absurd address "the existential tragic," i.e. suffering induced by being cast into the world, the grotesque as an aesthetic framework suggests that the imbalance between man and the world stems from social problems. This doesn't imply that the dark humour of the play is lessened in any way but, paradoxically, that it will produce a healing effect, rather than that of incomprehension or discomfort. Most Hungarian plays composed in the vein of the grotesque (Csurka: *Döglött Aknák*, 1971; *Házmestersirató*, 1978; Örkény: *Vérrokonok*, 1974; etc.,) simultaneously foreground and ridicule the predicament of having to live a primarily "social existence" amidst the political and economic upheavals of Hungary. The political impetus and the resulting aesthetics converge in the use of a black humour that constantly pervades the main theme: the presentation of the common man against the monolithical State. This produces the East European equivalent of Arthur Miller's Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, offering an altogether new kind of dramatic hero. The Hungarian drama critic, Erzsébet Ézsiás sees the forces behind this phenomenon in the larger context of East European drama, but her point of view is closely related to Miller's argument that the common man has replaced the traditional tragic hero. As she points out:

> The Hungarian grotesque is the necessary consequence of changes in life-style and perspective: the traditional types of literary heroes seem

> outdated and devalued, while the life and problems of the common man are foregrounded. What characterizes its East European variants is valid for the Hungarian grotesque as well: the desire to amend through reprobation, to provide a "critique of the mundane."[5]

Viewed from this perspective, the "devaluation" of the traditional hero affirms rather than eliminates some psychological responses traditionally associated with the tragic/comic dichotomy. By providing avenues for identification with the hero through laughter and pity, the grotesque produces a cathartic effect both in terms of rehearsing emotions in preparation for real life situations and by supplying a space for relief and recuperation. The plays are therapeutic in that they liberate the spectators of their fears and urge them to participate in a strategy of survival. The result is the formation of a community that "understands"; in fact, the public feels privileged, assuming that the play is particularly addressed to them as insiders. Members of the audience will deny that an outsider is capable of deciphering the message, thereby making their socio-aesthetic experiences an entitlement. This implies only *one* way of truly enjoying the play, in which the prerequisite of pleasure is thorough familiarity with the political context surrounding the piece. Initiation to such entitlement is only by fire, that is by living under the neo-Stalinist regime of Hungary. The "absolute laughter" thus becomes a social privilege.

Hence the political and the aesthetic join forces in creating ties between members of the theatrical community. The psychology of laughter supports their sense of uniqueness: a rather poignant illustration of Freud's interpretation of the joke based on the dynamics of inferiority and superiority. As opposed to a typical audience response to the absurd, which includes feelings of bemused incomprehension and alienation, spectators of the grotesque gain a sense of superiority by resolving the inherent ambivalence in the tone through recourse to immediate, social experience.

The potential for creating a community through the appropriation of a certain aesthetic is echoed through Örkény's lecture, in which he points out the following differences between the absurd and the grotesque:

> ...the western absurd is based upon the complete negation of communication. We (Hungarians) also see humanity aimlessly roaming around in the age of the atomic bomb, but as individuals living in our uncomfortable situation at the border of two worlds, we have not lost our relationships. ...we go on understanding each other in our private lives as well as on the stage.[6]

Örkény assumes certain basic differences between the communication patterns of Western and Eastern European individuals, and typically addresses the Eastern European perspective only from a social point of view. Nonetheless, given the political climate in Hungary in the 1960's and 1970's, he is voicing an

opinion shared by most writers of the period. As Örkény's comments reveal, the East European grotesque distinguishes itself by responding to social rather than metaphysical paradoxes, with the implication that for most Hungarians metaphysical dilemmas would be considered a luxury in a pressing social situation.

Örkény continues to detail the differences between the absurd and the grotesque, yet again contextualizing them socially, this time focusing on dramatic action. He remarks on the main characters of Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot* that,

> Vladimir and Estragon don't act, because waiting is a passive form of behavior. Vladimir and Estragon have neither a reason nor a goal to prompt them to act. In contrast, our characters —just like the ordinary and simple people in our countries — are active. This is not a question of temperament, but of experience. We have preserved our capacity for action, because more than once we have managed to change our lives through action.[7]

In the lecture Örkény doesn't examine the concept of action when he extends the theatrical to the world outside the stage. Inaction as the only possible response to a rapidly changing and completely irrational social reality doesn't emerge as a dramaturgical possibility from the East European point of view. The same attitude is evident in drama critic Erzsébet Ézsiás's characterization of the absurd, which she contrasts to the grotesque on the basis of content. While maintaining that the grotesque attempts a social analysis, that it implies a complete action and provides venues for identification between hero and audience, she claims that the absurd,

> ...does not contain a specific action that starts and ends at a definite point. In the absurd dramas there are only fragments of an action, which, however, don't possess any organic significance, as there is nothing in the plot they could propel. Time marking the invisible coordinates of life has disappeared, and as the vision has no time dimension, the duration of the play becomes accidental. The characters are not socially and psychologically distinguished representatives of humanity; mostly they are mere indications, abstractions, or bipedal symbols. Their dialogue is often limited to empty clichés and impersonal commonplaces. No change whatsoever occurs in their situation. Identification with these characters is not an imperative.[8]

The comparison between the absurd and the grotesque reveals that in its East European version the grotesque becomes a perspective rather than a style. The perspective is the result of a particular geographical location as much as that of a shared historical past. The common experience creates a phenomenological

sensitivity for both the playwright and his audience, who find their channel of communication in the grotesque, in the curious mixture of dark humour, alienation, melodrama and irony. Thus besides its ability to shape a theatrical community, the grotesque provides a framework which facilitates the transformation of a potentially subversive theme into laughter.

The State understands the disarming qualities imbedded in the act of displacement, therefore the grotesque is frequently staged. Despite the inherent mobilizing capacity of the theatrical grotesque, its audience appears merely potentially, rather than actually subversive. Ties formed within the entitled group are emotional, intellectual, and above all ideological, but because the State's license to provide a new space for bondage is inherently deceptive, the revolutionary potential is suppressed by its very masquerade, as subversion is dispersed immediately after the spectators have left the auditorium.

It is because of its impact on the Hungarian audiences and the resulting reconfirmation of the power of the State that the grotesque eventually turns into "bad medicine" failing to adequately address social problems. The treatment is symptomatic, which aggravates rather than eliminates suffering. The latent call for action in the final analysis of the grotesque, which Örkény celebrates enthusiastically, dissipates through laughter. Thus the playwright, by allowing the audience to "blow off" steam, involuntarily becomes an agent of the political status quo. Reinforcing the idea of uniqueness in the "insiders", the plays themselves support the containment of subversive energies. Audiences leave the theatre with a sense of relief and satisfaction and work out the ramifications of the tension created by the piece through discussing it in terms of its bravery or veiled subversion.

NOTES

[1]The grotesque doesn't emerge in isolation in Hungary; in fact, the analysis that follows is in part applicable to the plays of Tadeusz Rozewicz, Slawomir Mrozek, Vaclav Havel, and Marin Sorescu, written in neighbouring socialist countries and displaying quite similar ideological and aesthetic components. Because this essay looks at *Tóték* in detail, I am focusing on the Hungarian variant of the East European grotesque.

[2]Charles Baudelaire, "On the Essence of Laughter" [1855], in *The Mirror of Art*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1955), pp. 131-153.

[3]Róbert Sarlós's unpublished translation of István Örkény's play is the property of the University of California, Davis. For a published translation of Örkény's novel based on his paly see: *The Flower Show; The Toth Family*, translators M.H. Hein and Clara Györgyey (New York: New Directions, 1982).

[4]István Örkény, "A közép-európai groteszk" [The Grotesque of Central Europe] *Magyar Nemzet*, April 4, 1992. p. 10. The following quotes are my translations from the Hungarian original.

[5]Erzsébet Ézsiás, *Mai magyar dráma* [The Hungarian Drama of Today] (Budapest: Kossuth könyvkiadó, 1986) pp. 16-17. The text appears in my translation.

[6]Örkény, "A közép-európai groteszk," p. 10.

[7]*Ibid.*

[8]Ézsiás, *Mai magyar dráma*, pp. 14-15.

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The Social Opposition: Labour in Post-Communist Hungary

Sándor Agócs

This essay aims to re-examine the development of the labour movement in post-Communist Hungary from 1990 to 1994. In contrast to the rather narrow source-base of most work on the subject published in English, this study draws upon a full range of Hungarian sources: on newspaper reports and commentaries, as well as on interviews with union leaders, activists and Hungarian social scientists. It also relies on personal observations that the author made during extended stays in Hungary. Since the collapse of the Communist regime in 1990 left virtually all of Hungary's industrial enterprises in state hands, the role, as earlier studies appearing in English have observed, government played in labour-relations was overwhelming. The government was then the nation's chief employer. The state was also responsible for universal health care and old age pensions. Since labour committed itself to maintain these benefits, our description of the fate of the labour movement in post-Communist Hungary must necessarily present — unlike the bargaining process that takes place in the West — a confrontation between government and labour that involves larger issues than the interests of union members (i.e. wages and working conditions), issues that affect the wellbeing of the entire population.

After 1989 unemployment fast became one of labour's greatest concerns. Virtually unknown under Communist rule, it began to grow by leaps and bounds after the change of regime and had risen to nearly 14% of the active labour force by January 1993.[1] This development created very serious problems for the government. The sudden need to build a social safety net for the newly unemployed more or less from scratch caused massive hemorrhaging in a state budget already burdened by huge deficits. As for the workers, the impact of the avalanche of unemployment was devastating. In a remarkable series of articles published in the daily *Pesti Hírlap* during the Spring of 1991, András Rózsa surveyed the workers' attitudes. The refrain of their statements was fear. They feared losing their jobs and were worried about not being able to support their families. They were reluctant to talk to journalists. "If you open your mouth you'll find yourself on the street." And after "they" kick you out, you had still

better be quiet if you don't want "the relatives who work in the plant to get into trouble." This mind-numbing, totalitarianoid fear appeared to be the basic determinant of the labour-management relationship in democratic Hungary. The perception of "us" (the workers) and "them" (the managers) whose interests were in conflict had existed already in the Communist era. But now the managers acquired even greater power of intimidation as they implemented the drastic reduction of the labour force.[2]

A public opinion survey revealed that by the end of 1992 unemployment was generally considered the country's most important social problem. What made the situation especially aggravating for people was that they felt they could not depend on the organizations of labour to protect their interests. When asked by Rózsa and other journalists about the unions, the workers gave responses like "they do nothing but collect dues," and "they don't care about us." This popular mistrust was demonstrated by the fact that in a Gallup survey done in June 1991 the unions came in last among the social and political institutions "that work for the people's well-being," scoring 35 out of a potential 100. The churches were judged the most useful, with a score of 60. Because of this crisis of representative institutions — to quote László Lengyel, an economist and social commentator — "the worker was not in a bargaining position."[3]

Labour leader Sándor Nagy complained of fragmentation. "There is no solidarity among the workers," he said, "only individual survival strategies; yet only through joint action can the employees hope to defend their interests." This indifference toward "joint action" and the unions was in part a residue of the Hungarian workers' experience with the labour movement under the Communist regime. The union had then been a tool of the Party's policies; a "transmission belt" of its power. When the Communist era ended, Nagy was the head of the National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, SZOT), the monolithic organization into which the regime had herded all the unions. SZOT's real purpose was clearly shown by the fact that Nagy was also a member of the Party's Central Committee. The organizations of labour served the Party more than they served the workers. Rudolf L. Tőkés was not far from the truth when he wrote that while the Communists were in power, the unions "did many things, but failed to represent their members' interests at the places of work."

But those "many things" — subsidized cultural activities, organized holidays and mortgages at low rates of interest — were fast becoming things of the past by 1991. The unions tried to ease the pain caused by runaway inflation by buying consumer goods, from panty-hose to milk and meat, wholesale and reselling them to members at cost. But labour now faced massive, permanent layoffs, something they had never experienced during the Communist regime, when a job had been everybody's for the taking. And the unions seemed unable to do anything about this crisis.[4]

Labour's Fragmentation and Infighting Draws Public Anger

The collapse of the Communist system left the Hungarian labour movement divided against itself. In 1991 there were seven major union groupings in the country:

1. *Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége*: Hungarian Confederation of Trade Unions (MSZOSZ).

2. *Autonóm Szakszervezetek Országos Koordinációja*: National Coordination of Autonomous Trade Unions (AUTONÓMOK).

3. *Szakszervezetek Együttműködési Fóruma*: Trade Union Cooperation Forum (SZEF).

4. *Értelmiségi Szakszervezeti Tömörülés*: Intellectual Workers' Alliance (ÉSZT).

5. *Munkástanácsok Országos Szövetsége*: National Federation of Workers' Councils (MOSZ).

6. *Szolidaritás Szakszervezeti Munkásszövetség*: Solidarity Workers' Trade Union Federation (SZOLIDARITÁS).

7. *Független Szakszervezetek Demokratikus Ligája*: Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions (LIGA).

This division was rooted in the conditions of the waning years of Communist rule. During the late 1980s "alternative," dissident organizations increasingly challenged the monopoly position of SZOT. By 1988, since it could not successfully fight them, SZOT had joined the alternative unions in attacking the Communist Party and the government, and thus became instrumental in the regime's collapse. In March 1990 SZOT held its 26th and last Congress, which declared itself the "founding congress" of MSZOSZ. The election of Sándor Nagy as the president of the new organization was met with thundering applause by the delegates. He had made himself popular among union members by standing up to the Communist government. Nagy eventually resigned from the Party's Central Committee and attempted to turn the unions into real advocates of the workers' interests. In doing so he drew upon himself the ire of conservatives within the Party. But these actions did not save MSZOSZ from being labelled "Communist" later on, and attacked on the grounds of its questionable legitimacy.

MSZOSZ, facing intense competition from the other unions, looked like a wounded giant in 1990. The organization still claimed 2.5 million members,

about half the country's labour force. Its members were spread over the occupational spectrum, but in certain occupational areas MSZOSZ faced extinction. Some of the old SZOT's branches refused to join its successor and established themselves as separate federations. AUTONÓMOK, one such organization, claimed a membership of 350,000. Employees of the various lines of the chemical industry provided the largest part of its membership, but AUTONÓMOK had branch organizations in the public services as well, such as transportation and energy. SZEF, another federation that was born out of the breakup of SZOT, in 1990 claimed 708,000 members. Almost all of them were public sector employees, such as educators, administrative, health and social care employees. ÉSZT, with a membership of 100,000, gathered together those working in higher education and scientific research.

Three other union groupings had emerged as "alternative" organizations of labour during the waning days of the Communist regime. MOSZ was at first the factory extension of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the party that became the leading force of the first democratic government. After the 1990 elections, MOSZ declared itself independent, but the attempt to break out of the MDF's orbit was never fully successful and became a source of conflict within the federation's leadership. MOSZ's membership, about 100,000, came chiefly from among factory workers. SZOLIDARITÁS, another new union, also carried the word "worker" in its name, claiming that its 230,000 members included not only industrial, but also agricultural and intellectual "workers." LIGA, the seventh of the union configurations, was born and remained a die-hard opponent of SZOT and its successor MSZOSZ, advertising itself as "the other union." LIGA claimed that two-thirds of its 100,000 members came from blue-collar occupations. In its locals and regional organizations, however, intellectuals, especially teachers, played an important role.[5]

The need for coordination among these ideologically diverse and competing federations of labour was obvious. However, an important and widely-publicized attempt to bring them together in "round table" talks collapsed in January 1991. Commentaries in the newspapers and especially union members' "letters to the editor" sized up the situation as a clear sign of the unions' inability to come to terms with a situation that demanded joint action. To these critical voices the President of the Republic Árpád Göncz added his. The grandfatherly President — Uncle Árpi, as he was nicknamed — who consistently showed up first among public figures in popularity polls, offered to mediate in the "suicidal" conflict among the federations. If it continued, he said, it would lead not only to the disintegration of the labour movement, but would threaten even the country's political stability. President Göncz received delegations from the various federations. Aware of a growing "existential fear" among the population, he was to remind the congress of LIGA that the unions have to be "instruments of social conscience."[6]

MSZOSZ Takes on the Government

In line with the President's perception of the role that the unions should play, MSZOSZ increasingly adopted a militant stance, assuming the role of a "social opposition" and challenging "the current power structure," which according to the union, was carrying out policies "contrary to the interests of working people." On June 3, 1991 MSZOSZ initiated a discussion with the government in order to "reduce social tensions." Its delegation, led by Sándor Nagy, brought a nine-point program to the table. Aside from guaranteeing jobs to young people at the beginning of their working careers, the union demanded that the government deal with several aspects of unemployment and job security, that a voice be given to employees and their organizations in the privatization process, shares for them in the privatized enterprises, and severance pay if they should lose their jobs. The union also demanded that the government work out a "social package" addressing the problems of low-income families, and that it raise minimum wages across the country.[7]

After the first discussions, the union omitted demands such as a government guarantee of jobs for young people and the shortening of the work week, which the government proved unwilling to consider. As for the remaining six demands, Gyula Kiss, the Labour Minister, and György Schamschula, the State Secretary of the Ministry, played out something of a "good cop-bad cop" routine. The Minister said that MSZOSZ was "banging on open doors" with its demands; that there was an "agreement of intentions" between the government and the union. The only disagreement was about timing. But when the union pressed for a schedule of the measures to be introduced, and also for details, Schamschula snapped that in "high-level negotiations like these, it is not appropriate to work out the details." MSZOSZ, he said, did not want an agreement, "but a confrontation" between its members and the power of the state, "and that will end with the little guys losing."[8] The conflict continued to escalate. On June 8, MSZOSZ declared that the government had offered nothing but obscure promises, and organized a strike committee. It called for a two-hour nation-wide "warning strike" on June 13 if an agreement had not been reached by then.[9]

The First Trial of Strength: A Call for a General Strike

The threat of a general strike brought on an angry reaction from the government. Its spokesmen cried "blackmail" and they repeated the government's position over and over again: "Steps which will create social tension, and which lead to organizing strikes and demonstrations endanger the country's stability as well as investments both of internal and foreign origin, thereby threatening the living standards of the population. Especially now, at the beginning of the tourist season, it is important that Hungary appear an attractive and safe country to the world." To this Mihály Kupa, the Minister of Finance, added a strong warning

about the dire consequences of further deficits. Yet in the next breath he contradicted himself and made it known that 15 billion forints (about US $200 million) would be allocated for social projects over and above the sums originally planned. One hand waving the stick and the other holding out the carrot? The government announced its willingness to continue negotiating, and suggested in fact that it was carrying on parallel negotiations with the two "alternative" federations: LIGA and MOSZ.[10]

The government's success in playing up one segment of the labour movement against another was strongly suggested by these two federations' rejection of the MSZOSZ strike call. The central leadership of MOSZ condemned the call, suggesting that MSZOSZ was attempting to get a "separate deal." This accusation was not without irony given the fact that MOSZ apparently agreed to participate in separate negotiations with the government at the time. In fact, this federation assumed positions almost identical to those of the government. In rejecting the strike call, their communique talked of "blackmail" and the "danger to social peace," as well as the economic damage caused by the strike threat, since it would scare away foreign investment.[11]

LIGA also announced that it would conduct separate negotiations with the government and presented a list of "themes." These gave the impression of an essentially watered-down, less costly version of the MSZOSZ demands. LIGA called for a meeting of all the federations to reconcile their positions. At the same time it condemned the strike call, since it broke up the "unity of the labour movement." Csaba Őry, one of LIGA's leaders, said that the strike call had created a dangerous situation, bringing a "hysterical union" into conflict with "a government policy very insensitive to social issues." "The country is not in the mood for a strike," he declared.[12]

The leadership of MSZOSZ was claiming just the opposite, arguing that their membership supported the use of the strike weapon. "We have surveyed the mood carefully" said Sándor Nagy after touring union locals across the country. But on June 10, when he announced this, he conceded that only 220 of his 400 construction industry locals had responded so far to the strike call, and only 170 of them had approved it. Nagy presented the 170 approving votes as a positive sign: but they clearly showed that the support among the locals was much less than total.

The Union Locals Cooperate

The strike call went out in the West Hungarian town of Székesfehérvár. How poignant all this was: spokesmen outlining the government's position about the strike also announced that the last Soviet soldier would leave the country within a month. In Székesfehérvár, where a Soviet armoured division had been based square in the middle of town since 1945, this newly-won freedom had to be demonstrated. On June 6 people carrying large placards and chanting anti-

government slogans marched across town and held a protest meeting. It was significant that the call for the demonstration had been issued by the local leadership of both MSZOSZ and LIGA, usually bitter opponents. A letter sent to Prime Minister József Antall, complaining about rising unemployment, carried the signatures of both of these organizations. Even the Székesfehérvár locals of MOSZ signed it, although they later announced that they would not support the strike.[13]

The strike call, once set in motion, created a dynamism of its own, which did not necessarily coincide with the aims of the central union leadership. One cannot say that the eventual coming together of labour was a direct result of what happened in places like Székesfehérvár; yet these events, showing the members' inclination toward coordinated action, pushed the leaders of the federations toward cooperation. On June 12, the day before the MSZOSZ strike date, the government spokesmen were still speaking of holding separate talks with the "independents" MOSZ and LIGA. But on the same day six of the federations — with SZOLIDARITÁS absent — worked out and signed a joint statement which was not far in content from MSZOSZ's six-point list of demands. President Göncz, who had invited the labour leaders for a talk the previous day, might have had something to do with the surprise agreement. At the same time, the National Association of Entrepreneurs issued a statement urging a "much greater willingness to negotiate" not only on the part of the unions, but the government as well.[14]

The government did indeed show "much greater willingness to negotiate" when it faced a united front of six labour federations. As a result, an agreement was reached on the evening of June 12, just about twelve hours before the strike was to begin. LIGA made what looked like a last attempt to steal MSZOSZ's show, by inviting the other federations to a meeting with the government to be held the following day. The government, which delegated a deputy secretary of state to conclude and sign the agreement with MSZOSZ, sent László Surján, the Welfare Minister, to the meeting with LIGA. But by an ironic turn of events, what Surján did was to announce the agreement signed by MSZOSZ in the name of six federations, including LIGA. In the deal the government promised action aimed at giving a say to the employees' organizations in the privatization process; to use some of the money gained from privatization for job creation; to secure severance pay to those who lost their jobs; and to address other issues involving the minimum wage and the living conditions of low-income families. The MSZOSZ strike committee, claiming victory, thanked the other federations for their support and goodwill. Even so, Csaba Őry, the Vice President of LIGA, showed everything but goodwill. On the day the agreement was signed, he declared it MSZOSZ's "attempt to escape" the problem of its illegitimacy. The strike call, he said, "had done more damage than good."[15]

The Conflict among Labour Federations Continues

The June 12 agreement, which, according to MSZOSZ added 5 billion forints to the employees' incomes in one way or another, brought the federations together but did not bridge the differences between them. Continuing internal struggles within the leadership of MOSZ led to the disengagement of this federation from another agreement reached on June 25 about the division of the old SZOT patrimony among the federations. Imre Palkovics, the President of MOSZ, declared that the union's Vice President (who had signed the deal) had not been authorized to do so. Palkovics announced that he intended to propose legislation in Parliament (he was a Member in the ranks of the MDF) to solve the problem of the division of SZOT property. The other federations protested, saying that this was an internal matter for the labour movement to resolve. LIGA at first walked out of the negotiations, but after asking for the tape of the discussions, decided to sign the final agreement. And so it went: the unions coming together and dividing again. The infighting within the labour movement, often triggered by politicking inside given federations, continued. The first serious test of strength between the government and the unions in June settled the question of whether labour would be a factor in the life of democratic Hungary. But it also confirmed, even dramatized the conflicts among the unions.[16]

As for the government, which the unions accused of being "anti-labour," the shadow-boxing involved in the June strike-call and the subsequent compromise did involve some loss of face. In attempting damage control, its communique pointed out that it had not really given in under pressure, since "the demands drawn up by MSZOSZ coincided with the steps the government had planned in order to solve the very same problems ." In mentioning ways of resolving these problems, the communique also suggested that the government had not really assumed concrete obligations. Many, if not most of the issues involved in the agreement would have to go to Parliament, where even the opposition parties — except the Socialists, who, as "ex-Communists," faced like MSZOSZ continuous questioning of their legitimacy — had condemned the strike call. Or else they would end up in the Conciliation Council (*Érdekegyeztető Tanács*) a triangular organization which included representatives of the government, the employers, and the employees, but which had no legislative power and could only recommend action. But to say that all labour got were promises would be misrepresenting the situation. The events of the hot and tense June days forced the government to confront social problems and to revise its social agenda; or, as most labour spokesmen, even those who represented "independent" unions, repeatedly pointed out, come up with the social policy that it did not have before the June strike call.[17]

MSZOSZ had won a victory of a kind at the expense of its opponents and tormentors, LIGA and MOSZ. These had shown themselves inconsistent, hesitant, and on occasion, subservient to the government. MSZOSZ had fought for improvements in pensions and the minimum wage, issues involving, in one

way or another, almost the whole population of the country, and not just the interests of its members or organized labour as a whole. The question of MSZOSZ's legitimacy — that perennial argument of the "independent" unions and spokesmen for the coalition parties — had become rather meaningless. Yet the celebratory announcement of MSZOSZ's strike committee at the end of June that "several points of the agreement have already been fulfilled" was countered by union President Nagy's warning that the attainment of some parts of the agreement, like the provision for severance pay, would take a long time, since they required parliamentary action. He could have added the need for eventual enforcement by the courts, since some of the employers would obviously simply ignore the provisions even if they became law. The MSZOSZ victory celebrations were somewhat premature, in fact self-defeating. As the editorial writer of the daily *Magyar Hírlap* pointed out, if indeed the government met some of the union's demands with promises that they did not intend to fulfill, this "success propaganda" would almost certainly backfire: the newly-gained credibility of the union's leadership would be diminished among the members and future strike calls might go unanswered.[18]

The General Strike Fails as Labour's Weapon

This indeed happened later the same year. To back its demands — which to a large extent suggested that the union was refighting the June battle — MSZOSZ called a two-hour general strike on December 17, 1991. The strike, when it came, was anything but general: on the morning of December 17 the strike committee conceded that only 28 of MSZOSZ's 69 member organizations had walked out, the others having reported that they would support the union's demands "by other means," such as signing solidarity declarations or hoisting blue flags at the plants' entrances. At the VIDEOTON factory in Székesfehérvár, where eventually the labour force was reduced by 80%, only a few workers went on strike. The rest signed protest declarations. János Fehér, secretary of MSZOSZ's VIDEOTON local, talked of the employees' "fear" of losing their jobs as an explanation for their lack of support. He was not alone in pointing to this factor in the virtual collapse of the strike, in which no more than 5-10% of the labour force appears to have participated. Newspapers reported managers threatening would-be strikers with firing. The failure of the strike was in part caused by division within the labour movement. After some talk of support, the "independent" federations failed to heed the strike call. This time it was LIGA that came to the defense of the government, asserting that MSZOSZ's demands, if conceded, would sink the budget. Sándor Nagy argued in vain that his union's demands would cost the Treasury only 40 billion forints (about US $3OO million) and not the 100 billion (about US $8OO million) that LIGA claimed. But the strike attempt was a clear failure, showing that labour would have to give up the general strike as its weapon.[19]

In calling for general strikes the leadership of MSZOSZ acted out a conditioning acquired during the years of Communist domination when, as western observers like Richard B. Freeman, Derek C. Jones, and others rightly pointed out, the central leadership of labour dealt with the centre of political power, the Party and the government. The end of what Jones called "centralized wage determination" and Freeman "state wage and price setting," obviously would bring about a decentralization of bargaining. This change was not immediate, however, because the state had retained a strong presence in the economy. State ownership was rapidly diminishing — it had reportedly fallen by about 50% by 1993 — but in April 1994 the State Property Agency still controlled 1,100 of the 1,800 enterprises that it had held at the time of the old regime's collapse. Thus bargaining would still have to involve the government. Unfortunately many of the enterprises remaining in the agency's hands were hopeless cases, and had no chance of survival in the new market economy. The government and Parliament, struggling with huge budget deficits — in part because they tried to maintain jobs at these enterprises — were very resentful and uncompromising targets for the general strike. Furthermore the uncertainty and fear related to job losses made the workers reluctant to take part in general strikes: they had their hands full with pressing local issues such as saving their jobs, issues that brought them into conflict with the managements of their workplaces. Labour's struggle had begun to turn from centralized negotiations to local, plant-by-plant confrontations. The leadership of MSZOSZ had to come to terms with the fact that the labour's efforts would increasingly evolve on the local level, in bargaining conducted, as the "alternative" unions would have it, with the owners of particular enterprises.[20] The "alternative" unions had in fact emerged during the waning years of the Communist regime, because — unlike the official union, SZOT — they had addressed local problems. Their links to western organizations, especially the help — in the form of advice and funds — offered LIGA by the AFL-CIO, also directed their attention towards local bargaining. Thus LIGA Vice-President Csaba Őry urged a turn toward "workplace-level" (*munkahelyi szintü*) action as early as 1991.[21]

During the early autumn of 1993 reports about a wave of local strikes began to appear in the newspapers, a fact suggesting that Őry might indeed have had a point. In October 1993 MSZOSZ invited labour leaders from Austria, Holland, and Germany to serve as the main speakers at a conference on collective bargaining. President Nagy, addressing the meeting, spoke of the Hungarians' lack of expertise and experience in such negotiations. He also expressed alarm about the increasing splintering of MSZOSZ. At the time of SZOT's disintegration over 100 of these organizations were attached to SZOT, but by the Fall of 1993 only 59 remained. This splintering, Nagy argued, had left labour impotent and unable to conclude collective agreements, and weak because of the lack of strike funds. It was in such condition that Hungarian labour was apparently heading toward a "westernization": workplace-level bargaining, a new phenomenon, was becoming more frequent. This offered advantages, including

the fact that such agreements had much better chance of being carried out since they were "owned" by the contracting parties. This system of bargaining brought an increasing localization of labour's efforts, which in turn generated a pressure toward uniting labour — a tendency prevailing currently in the West — since only large organizations could provide the sophisticated and costly research and legal facilities and, what's more important, the strike funds needed to make the workers' interests prevail. The persistence of industry-wide bargaining pointed to the growing importance of the MSZOSZ, which, because it was large, had more resources, both organizational and financial, than the "alternative unions." But it also suggested that the need for cooperation among the ideologically diverse federations of labour would become more and more acute as time passed.[22]

The Conciliation Council Brings the Labour Federations Together

After the failure of the December 1991 general strike attempt, Hungarian labour increasingly resorted to another means, negotiations within the Conciliation Council. This organization brought together the government, the employers — represented by organizations like the National Association of Entrepreneurs — and the unions. Labour's turn toward the Conciliation Council coincided with the government's recognition of the necessity for dialogue with a society that was becoming increasingly hostile. The Council had been created in 1988, during the last full year of Communist rule, by a government encountering massive popular hostility. It was to be used for dialogue carried on outside the political framework, which was discredited and on the verge of collapse. The new democratic government first tended to ignore the Council because it was a creature of the Communists. But increasing labour troubles, culminating during late October 1990 in a taxi strike that paralyzed traffic in Budapest, drove home the point that contact with society between elections was needed. From 1991 the Conciliation Council became active, dealing with an increasing number of issues. This was in the government's interest in more than one way. By discussing pressing budgetary and social issues as well as legislative proposals in the Council, the government gathered information about the temper of the country. Furthermore, since the Council had no legislative but only an advisory function, the government gained time. The discussions in the Council also promised compromise solutions, a chance to avert explosions such as calls for general strikes, which even if eventually recalled were nerve-racking for the politicians.[23]

As for labour, the hope for carrying on negotiations without strike action was not the only motivation in accepting the Council as a way of dealing with problems. Participation also brought the ideologically diverse federations together.[24] It took the government six weeks to become resigned to the division of SZOT property agreed upon by the labour federations. The final treaty became part of a larger agreement reached in the Conciliation Council during late November 1992. Labour, presenting a united front, gained concessions that,

if carried out, would add 36 billion forints (about US$ 300 million) to the budget. The government promised an increase in the minimum wage; reductions in some of the new sales taxes that it had planned to introduce (medicines and household electricity were now to be exempted); increases in family allowances; and a commitment that the age of retirement would not be increased for women until 1995. Furthermore, public service employees would get a pay raise, instead of having their wages frozen as the government had originally planned. These concessions followed the pattern of the agreement reached in June 1991: they involved the interests of a broad spectrum of society and not only those of union members. However, at this time the nation's jobless came out losers: the duration of unemployment compensation was reduced from 18 months to 12.[25]

Was this agreement one more move by the government to appear willing to respond to problems while really "passing the buck"? Mihály Kupa, the Finance Minister resorted to tautology when justifying "why the government's concessions went to the extreme limit": he spoke of "serious societal and social tensions." Even so, other members of the government openly attacked Kupa for having been "too accommodating" in his negotiations. In doing so, they ignored the real social tensions abroad in the country: railroad workers and coal miners talked of strikes; the elderly and retired were up in arms and organizing; and the actions of a grassroots coalition of the poor occupied the front pages of the newspapers. Soon Kupa was to be dismissed as Finance Minister altogether. Gyula Kiss, the Labour Minister, still showing hostility toward the unions instead of the protective goodwill labour ministers in western countries demonstrate, spoke of union "blackmail." Yet in spite of the disagreement within the government, Hungarians noticed that something truly new had occurred in the Conciliation Council. László Lengyel, a consistent critic of the government, praised it for once: "For the first time in Hungary and Eastern Europe a government has managed to come to an agreement with employers and employees about the next year's budget." The history-making first was recognized abroad too. Sándor Nagy, returning from a visit to Brussels in January, 1993, announced that the European Community — shocked at that time by the Danish rejection of the Maastricht Treaty and recognizing the need for dialogue between government and society — would give Hungary one million ECU to foster such dialogue. Most of the money was to be used in support of the Conciliation Council.[26]

Things looked good, but many expected that the government would eventually back out of the agreement reached in the Council. Some questioned for instance whether the government could deliver at all on its promises. The MDF-led coalition held, of course, a majority in Parliament, but it was falling into disarray by the summer of 1993. Internal struggles within the two parties that constituted the main Parliamentary base of the government, the MDF and the Smallholder Party, undermined its ability to pass legislation. Furthermore, the Conciliation Council agreement represented a challenge to the authority of Parliament as the arbiter of the country's affairs by facing it with something of a *fait accompli*, reviving the old antipathy toward labour even among the opposi-

tion parties. Under tremendous pressure not only from within its own coalition parties, but also because of a growing deficit, the government presented budget proposals during the summer of 1993 that withdrew some of the concessions of the November 1992 agreement. They increased the sales tax, for instance, and froze the salaries of public service employees, including teachers, for 1994.[27]

The teachers were not alone in facing the new regime with a growing mistrust. Many Hungarians were asking whether the coming of democracy meant that agreements between major representative institutions and the government had no real meaning; that concessions granted could be taken back, gains won in hard bargaining lost, and labour's wars fought again and again over the same terrain. The Conciliation Council was apparently caught up in such a situation, but this was not necessarily permanent. During the last months of 1993, the government again proceeded to "throw money at the people," as one sarcastically-inclined commentator put it, describing the promises then made in the Council. The parties that constituted the government were disastrously low in the polls and elections were scheduled for the Spring of 1994. Typically one of the last agreements negotiated in the Council in 1993 offered a tax-break to virtually the entire population by making the payments due to Social Security — 10% of one's salary — tax-deductible. This promised to leave large sums in the pay-packets of employees. The show went on: the unions demanded, and the government gave in to the "blackmail."[28]

Postscript

The concessions made in the Conciliation Council did not save the government. It suffered a disastrous defeat in the 1994 elections. The Socialists, who presented an essentially social-democratic program, won a 52% majority. During the electoral campaign they talked of a "social contract," an economic and wage program to be worked out in the Conciliation Council. A number of labour leaders, including Sándor Nagy, who eventually resigned his union leadership, ran and won a socialist parliamentary seat. Yet the new government did not succeed in bringing the "social contract" together. The explanation for this failure was primarily the constraint in wages and social benefits that the government, facing huge budget-deficits, had to impose. Negotiations in Council, often deadlocked, tend to deal nowadays with the specific demands of the public service unions, and rarely with national issues. This is in part due to the fact that the MSZOSZ, which used to bring to the Council issues that went beyond the sphere of industrial relations and involved the interests of large segments of the population, such as the rising cost of medicines and the diminishing value of pensions, or the living conditions of low-income families, had become much weaker by the middle of the 1990s. Once it had claimed 2.5 million members, but by the summer of 1996 it reportedly had only 500.000. In contrast to the public service unions, like the teachers', which retained substantial memberships,

the unions that belong to the MSZOSZ lost members rapidly as the old flagships of socialist industry were privatized. They shrank if they did not disappear altogether. Thus the issue is not anymore whether the union born out of the Communist era SZOT is legitimate: nationwide elections held in 1993 for the Workplace Councils and the Social Security and Pension Boards — uniquely Hungarian events — gave MSZOSZ a comfortable primacy among the organizations of labour. As time passes not the legitimacy of MSZOSZ but the very existence of its locals seems to be in question.

In fact, this applies to some extent to the whole union movement. While the Communists were in power, with all the unions herded into the official SZOT, this claimed to represent almost the entire labour force. By the summer of 1995 only about 30% of the 4 million employees were reportedly members of a union.[29] During the summer of 1996 when this essay was completed there were signs of an increasing ferment in labour activism across the nation, suggesting that the budget restraints imposed by the government and its financial policies designed to reduce consumption had gone beyond the limits people were willing to tolerate. In response to threats of large-scale strikes by health workers, teachers and others, there were promises of wage-concessions, and members of the government talked of finally negotiating the "social pact," and thereby revitalizing the Conciliation Council.

It remains to be seen whether this will really happen, and if it does, what the much weakened six labour federations — SZOLIDARITÁS had dropped out of the Council — can win in negotiating with a Socialist-led government that by a supreme historical irony is working hard to stabilize a capitalist system. Members of the government often claim that it is pro-labour, but on national television one labour-leader after another questions this.

NOTES

[1]Unemployment seems to have stabilized by 1995 around 10-11%, but experts point out that official statistics do not reflect the actual situation. People numbering in their tens, possibly hundreds of thousands have given up trying to find jobs and having been out of work for more than twelve months, ceased to receive unemployment compensation. Having thus fallen in between the boards, they do not figure any more in official statistics. See *Tallózó*, "Napló," Dec. 24, 1992; *Magyar Hírlap*, Dec. 4, 1992, Mar. 31, 1993, Apr. 8 and May 8, 1995; *Népszabadság*, June 28 and Sept. 28, 1993, Apr. 6, 1995; *Magyar Nemzet*, June 3, 1995.

[2]I wish to thank András Rózsa for providing me with copies of his report series which appeared in *Pesti Hírlap* between April 2 and May 14, 1991. With the dates of individual reports not available, I will henceforth refer to them collectively as the "Rózsa series," *in passim*. Similar information in *Népszabadság*, March 21, 1991; *Népszava*, July 3, 1991; and *Magyar Hírlap*, Apr. 30, 1992. Sándor Agócs, "The Collapse of Communist Ideology in Hungary," *East European Quarterly*, XXVII (June, 1993), pp.

200-201, presents elements of the conflict that developed between the managers of state-owned enterprises and the workers during the waning years of the Communist regime.

[3]Zsuzsanna Lonti and John Kervin, "Transformation of the Hungarian Industrial Relations System" in John F. Burton, editor, *Proceedings of the 44th Annual Meeting* (Madison: Industrial Relations Research Association), pp. 586-595; *Népszabadság*, March 8, 1991; *Délvilág*, March 26, 1991; *Népszava*, June 5, 1991. Rózsa series, passim. The survey is reported in *Népszabadság*, Aug. 17, 1991; Lengyel is quoted in *Pesti Hírlap*, June 17, 1991. See also Richard B. Freeman, "What Direction for Labour-Market Institutions in Eastern and Central Europe?" in *Double Shift: Transforming Work in Postsocialist and Postindustrial Societies*, Bertram Silverman, *et al.* eds. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 96ff.

[4]Rudolf L. Tőkés. "A második átmenet politikája Magyarországon" [The Politics of the Second Transition in Hungary], in *Magyarország politikai évkönyve* [The Political Yearbook of Hungary], Sándor Kurtán *et al.* eds. (Budapest: Ökonómia, 1991), p. 303; *Népszabadság*, March 13 and Aug. 23, 1991; *Magyar Hírlap*, Aug. 3 and Dec. 17, 1991. *Népszava*, Jan. 30, Feb. 5, 7, March 7 and Aug. 3, 1991.

[5]In Freeman (*op. cit.*, p. 118) membership figures differ somewhat from mine, which represent the 1990-1991 claims of the federations. They could not be independently confirmed. By the summer of 1993 MSZOSZ claimed only 1.2 to 1.3 million members, half of the earlier figure. (Written communication to the author, dated July 20, 1993). Discussions with union leaders, spokespersons and researchers during the summer of 1991, and the written information they offered helped me to understand the aims of the various federations and to find a focus in the flux of contemporary events. Another series of oral and written statements received during the summer of 1993 provided additional information as well as corrections to my perceptions. While thanking those listed below for their generosity in setting time aside to help with the study, I of course assume responsibility for the errors and misunderstandings that remain. I regret if those who helped me are disappointed because their points of view are not always reflected in the study; but facing a situation rife with conflict and ideological differences, I had to try to avoid taking sides. Indebtedness is acknowledged to: Sándor Bátonyi, Béla Berkes, Gábor Borbáth, Dr. Klára Busa, János Fehér, Dr. László Filipsz, András Hegedűs and the members of the seminar he organized, Béla Kalmár, Dr. István Kameniczky, Dr. László Kis Papp, László Könözsi, Rev. Dezső Kisérdi, Dr. György Lajtai, Paula Némethy, József Suhajda, Ilona Szőllösi, Dr. Kocsárd Székely and others, as the saying goes, "too numerous to mention."

[6]*Népszava*, Nov. 1, 1990; Jan. 11, Feb. 8, 9, March 2, Apr. 30 and May 2, 1991; *Népszabadság*, Feb. 20 and Apr. 9, 1991; *Liga Harsona*, Feb. 15, 1991; *Beszélő*, Feb. 16, 1991; *Magyar Hírlap*, Jan. 30, 1993.

[7]*Népszava*, Feb. 9 and June 3, 1991; *Magyar Nemzet*, July 11, 1991. Lonti and Kervin, *op. cit.*, *in passim*, mention the issue of employee participation in the privatization process and suggestions for a Hungarian form of ESOP. Peter and Sándor Agócs, "The Change Was But An Unfulfilled Promise: Agriculture and the Rural Population in Post-Communist Hungary," *East European Politics and Societies* (Winter 1994), pp. 32-57, deals with ESOP Hungarian-style as well as the devastating unemployment in rural Hungary.

[8]*Népszava*, June 4 and 6, 1991.

[9]*Népszava*, June 4, 1991; *Magyar Nemzet*, June 8 and 10, 1991.

[10]*Népszava*, June 4, 1991; *Esti Hírlap*, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Népszabadság* and *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, June 8, 1991. A US dollar was worth about 70 forints in 1991 and during the summer of 1996 had risen to 150. Both of these figures respresented the price of about two kilograms of bread.

[11]*Pesti Hírlap*, June 7 and 10, 1991; *Népszabadság*, June 8, 1991.

[12]*Népszava*, June 5, 7 and 8, 1991; *Mai Nap*, June 6, 1991; *Pesti Hírlap*, June 7 and 10, 1991; *Esti Hírlap*, June 8, 1991; *Magyar Hírlap*, June 10, 1991; *Népszabadság*, June 7, 8 and 10, 1991.

[13]*Magyar Hírlap*, June 10, 1991; *Népszabadság*, June 10, 1991; *Pesti Hírlap*, June 12, 1991; *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, June 5, 7, 8 and 12, 1991.

[14]*Vasárnapi Hirek*, June 9, 1991; *Népszava*, June 11, 12 and 13, 1991; *Magyar Hírlap*, June 12, 1991; *Magyar Nemzet*, June 12, 1991; also a joint "Statement" by the six federations dated June 12, 1991.

[15]*Népszabadság*, *Magyar Hírlap*, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Pesti Hírlap*, and *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, June 13, 1991. Several of these papers published the full text of the agreement.

[16]*Beszélő*, June 15, 1991; *Népszava*, June 26 and 27, 1991; *Magyar Hírlap*, June 22 and 27, 1991; *Pesti Hírlap*, July 18, 1991; *Népszabadság*, Oct. 18, 1991; written statement given to the author by MSZOSZ on July 20, 1993.

[17]*Magyar Nemzet*, June 13 and 14, 1991; *Népszava*, June 14, 1991; *Beszélő*, June 15, 1991.

[18]*Magyar Hírlap*, June 22 and 27, 1991; *Népszava*, June 25, 1991; *Beszélő*, June 15, 1991.

[19]*Magyar Hírlap*, Dec. 17, 18 and 19, 1991; *Tallózó*, Dec 19, 1991; *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, Dec. 18, 1991.

[20]István Kameniczky, "Economic and Social Transition in Hungary and the Trade Unions," an unpublished manuscript, dated 1992, pp. 14 and 17; Freeman, *op. cit.*, 96ff.; Derek C. Jones, "The Transformation of Labor Union in Eastern Europe: The Case of Bulgaria," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, April 1992, pp. 455ff. and 463; Lonti and Kervin, *op. cit.*, p. 591. *The Economist*, Apr. 30-May 6, 1994, p. 76.

[21]Interview with Őry in *Beszélő*, June 15, 1991.

[22]See the reports on the local strikes in *Tallózó*, Sept 2, 9 and 16; also *Népszabadság*, Sept. 10, Oct. 19 and 21. Nagy is quoted in *Magyar Hírlap*, Oct. 30, 1993.

[23]Freeman, *op. cit.*, pp. 104 and 113-115; Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 462 ff. and 468; Sylvia Borbély, "Social Dialogue in Hungary," an essay printed in 1993 by MSZOSZ, *passim*; the government communiqué about the negotiations with MSZOSZ, dated June 14, 1991; comments by Attila Ágh in *Magyar Hírlap*, Dec. 19, 1991.

[24]*Magyar Hírlap*, Sept. 12 and 19, 1992. *Tallózó*, Oct. 15, 1992.

[25]*Magyar Hírlap*, Nov. 23, 24 and 25, 1992; communiqué in English by MSZOSZ entitled "Agreement Reached Within the Conciliation Council," Dec. 1992.

[26]*Magyar Hírlap*, Nov. 23, 24, 30, and Dec. 5, 1992; *Figyelő*, Dec. 5, 1992; a press review in *Tallózó*, Dec. 17, 1992.

[27]*Magyar Hírlap*, May 25 and July 1; *Népszabadság*, June 9, 30 & July 1, 1993.

[28]Kameniczky, *op. cit.*, p. 27; *Magyar Hírlap*, Sept. 2, 4, 6 and 7, 1993; *Népszabadság*, Sept. 6, 1993; Freeman, *op. cit.*, pp. 104 and 114-115; Lonti and Kervin, *op. cit.*, pp. 592-594.

[29]*Népszabadság*, June 7, 1995; *Magyar Nemzet*, May 28, 1996.

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Review Article

Mutual Images and Stereotypes: The United States and Hungary

N.F. Dreisziger

Géza Závodszky, *American Effects on Hungarian Imagination and Political Thought* (Boulder, Colorado, and Highland Lakes, N.J.: Social Science Monographs and Atlantic Research and Publications; distributed by Columbia University Press, 1995), Amy Módly transl., vii + 335 pages.

Piotr Wandycz, "Western Images and Stereotypes of Central and Eastern Europe," in André Gerrits and Nanci Adler, eds., *Vampires Unstaked: National Images, Stereotypes and Myths in East Central Europe*. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1995. Pp. 5-23.

László Marácz, "Western Images and Stereotypes of the Hungarians," in Gerrits and Adler, eds., *Vampires Unstaked,* Amsterdam, 1995. Pp. 25-40.

John F. Montgomery, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1947); reprint edition by Vista Books, Morristown, N.J., 1993. 281 pages.

Hungarians and Americans or, at least, Hungarians and Americans who were knowledgeable about the world, have known about each other ever since the birth of the American Republic. However, the awareness about *Amerika* by the less then highly-educated members of the Hungarian public did not start to emerge until the 1840s, while a similar knowledge about Hungary in the US was not born until the visit of Louis Kossuth to the American Republic in 1851. Thereafter, certain historical developments tended to rekindle the mutual interest of these two nations in each other. In Hungary, the great expansion of economic opportunities in the United States during the last decades of the 19th century attracted attention, as did America's gradual rise to great power status in the first half of the 20th century. In the United States, the coming of thousands of the refugees of the 1848-1849 Hungarian War of Independence, the participation of

many of these ex-soldiers in the American Civil War and, in the three-and-a-half decades before 1914, the arrival of over a million economic migrants from Hungary, contributed to a greater interest in, and knowledge of, things Hungarian. In the twentieth century, Hungary's role in the international arena also attracted the attention of America's diplomats and statesmen, and after the Revolution of 1956 in Hungary, of the wider American masses as well. Further increasing American awareness of Hungary and Hungarians was the influx of two new waves of Hungarian newcomers, after the Second World War and, more importantly, in the wake of the 1956 uprising, respectively.

Despite these historical contacts and interactions, the images Hungarians and Americans had of each other were often imperfect and incomplete. They were in many cases mere stereotypes. Little attention has been paid by historians to the evolution of the mutual views or, more precisely, of the mutual stereotypes that Magyars and Americans held of each other through the ages. The works reviewed here each contribute, to a greater or lesser extent, to the historiography of this subject and are therefore worth examining.

* * *

Géza Závodszky's *American Effects on Hungarian Imagination and Political Thought* documents the fact that interaction between Hungarians and Americans existed even before 1848, in particular, that the United States had an important impact on the evolution of Hungarian political ideas and public beliefs from the time of the Republic's birth to the eve of the 1848 Revolution. To prove this, Závodszky has examined the echoes that political, economic and social developments and trends in the United States had evoked in Hungary's press and in the writings of her political and literary elites. He demonstrates that "*Amerika*" had a profound impact on Hungarian political ideas and provided an impetus toward demands for changes in public life, first and foremost in the realm of penal reforms.

In those times Hungarians received information about the United States through French, German and other intermediaries, from Hungarian citizens who had travelled there (or who corresponded with Americans), and above all, from travelogues about America written by Hungarians themselves. In this category, the most important work was Alexander Bölöni Farkas's *Utazás Észak-Amerikában* [Journey in North America] (1834), a book which achieved unprecedented popularity in Hungary until its further reprinting was banned by Habsburg authorities fearful of its pro-republican and pro-democratic sentiments. The United States depicted in Bölöni Farkas's book became the model that the great majority of Hungarian reformers wished to emulate. The impact of a later work, Ágoston Haraszthy's similarly entitled *Utazás Éjszak-Amerikában* [Journey in North America] (1844), was less pervasive, although this account alerted some of its readers to the economic opportunities provided by the United States, mainly

because of the keen interest its author seems to have had in making profit while touring and learning about America.

Závodszky's monograph fills a large gap in the English-language literature of the story of Hungary's Americanization, and a smaller one in the history of that mega-trend which the author sees as the Americanization of the whole world, a process that had started in the eighteenth century and has been accelerating ever since. His book is extensively researched and contains a useful bibliography as well as biographical notes (pp. 297-313). It will undoubtedly serve a generation of students of the American impact on Hungary of the pre-1848 era. One can only hope that in the not too distant future, works of this nature will emerge also on some of the lesser documented phases of the post-1848 age.

* * *

Professor Wandycz's paper, given as a keynote address in the conference from which issued the volume of essays *Vampires Unstaked*, does not say much about American images of Hungary, as he deals with the larger subject of French, British and American attitudes to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but what he says is often interesting. His first conclusion is that "the ignorance of East European matters in the West... has not appreciably diminished in spite of the emergence of groups of well qualified regional experts." (p. 18). Secondly, Wandycz argues, the images of East Europe in the West have been, in recent decades, more negative than positive." He also suggests, in particular reference to the image of Hungarians, that whether their reputation was positive or negative, depended in large part on the ideological outlook of the Westerners who were passing judgement. (p. 18).

* * *

In *Vampires Unstaked,* Wandycz's paper is followed by László Marácz's study of the Western images and stereotypes of the Magyars. This work suggests that Western images of Hungarians through the ages remained rather consistent and contained both "positive and negative values," and that shifts between these were "triggered" by "political decisions" and changing "attitudes in the West" (p. 26). Indeed, it seems that Western opinions about Hungary, from the time of the Hungarian "plundering forays" into Western Europe in the ninth century to our age, were more the result of deliberately orchestrated propaganda than of actual realities. During the 9th century such propaganda was inspired by Holy Roman Emperors whose princely rivals had recruited the Hungarians to ravage the emperors' lands. In the 17th and 18th centuries, negative images of Hungarians were propagated by the House of Habsburg as well as Germans living in Hungary, in order to discredit the Magyars' demands for more autonomy within the Habsburg realm. Conversely, positive images of Hungarians were promoted

by popes who wanted their non-Hungarian subjects to follow the example of certain particularly pious Magyar rulers, or much later by Western liberals who wished to inspire their countries' peoples with the examples set by Hungarians struggling for modernization and independence. Later, in the 20th century, the image of Hungarians underwent drastic gyrations. English propaganda against Hungary started in 1908, at the time when the United Kingdom sought rapprochement with Germany's enemies. The war of words began with R.W. Seton-Watson's *Racial Problems in Hungary* (1908), which strove to demolish the "Kossuth myth" of a liberal Hungary and replace it with an image of Magyars as obstacles to progress and oppressors of minorities. This propaganda offensive only intensified during the First World War, especially in 1917 when the aim of British (and Allied) diplomacy became the destruction of Austria-Hungary and the Western public had to be prepared for this event. Negative images of the Magyars persisted until the events in Budapest of 1956, after which Hungarians became once again positively regarded in the West. After all, they had joined the West's struggle against Soviet expansionism.

In his brief introduction to *Vampires Unstaked* André Gerrits identified the volume's first aim as outlining the images that nations of East Central Europe have of each other, as well as those that the West has of them. The second goal was to determine to what extent these images affected political decisions in — or about — the region. The volume at hand has been more successful in accomplishing the first of these aims. Concerning the second one, only tentative, and not very convincing, answers have been given. Wandycz, for example, points out that the negative image of Poles that generally prevailed in early twentieth century United States, did not keep America's leaders from supporting the cause of Polish restoration in the wake of World War I (p. 11). On the other hand, he admits that a favourable public image of a country did not necessarily result in vigorous Western action on its behalf when it was threatened by an outside power, as had been demonstrated in the case of Czechoslovakia during the Munich crisis, and again during the Soviet occupation of Prague in 1968. When everything said is taken into consideration, the following query remains basically unanswered: would the tens of millions of East Europeans who were left stateless by the post-World War I peace settlement — or found themselves living as minorities in the nation states of other peoples — have found better treatment had their image been a more favourable one in the West?

* * *

While Zavodszky's book dealt entirely with Hungarian images of America, John F. Montgomery's book (originally published in 1947 by the Devin-Adair publishing company of New York) offers an example of an American's image of Hungary. And Montgomery's view is an unusual, almost unique one, offering a

favourable portrait of both interwar Hungary and, what is more remarkable, of her elite, at a time when Western images of Hungary were generally negative.

It is well-known from about 1910 to 1956, that Hungary did not enjoy a favourable image in the West, a circumstance that must have had a very damaging impact on the country's evolution given the fact that it was precisely in this period that two peace settlements were imposed on the Hungarian nation. How Hungary had lost its previously good reputation in the decade leading up to the outbreak of World War I is explained in part by Géza Jeszenszky's excellent monograph, *Az elvesztett presztízs* [The lost prestige].[1] The decline of Hungary's reputation in Great Britain contributed to a similar decline in the United States, especially during the Great War. During the this conflict English propaganda against Hungary reached the United States and was supplemented by local anti-Magyar propaganda after the US entered the war against the Central Powers in 1917.[2] Anti-Hungarian sentiments persisted throughout the post-war years and into the 1920s and 1930s. They were reinforced by the propaganda that was being spread by former members of the post-war revolutionary regime of Count Mihály Károlyi, as well as spokesmen of the Little Entente countries (the newly-established Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and the greatly enlarged Rumania) who wanted to make sure that Hungary's reputation in North America and elsewhere stayed negative, while those of their own nations continued to be favourable.

With the outbreak of the World War II in 1939, the situation further deteriorated, as the American public came to associate Hungary with the countries that had aligned their policies with those of Nazi Germany. In December of 1941 Hungary's reputation in North America reached its nadir when the American Republic became involved in the world conflict after the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, and after Hungary's government — imitating the example of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy — declared war on the United States. During the three years that followed, Hungary was seen as Hitler's ally, and greater credibility was gained by those who wished to condemn Hungary or, at least, her ruling élite. The Hungarian émigré left went into high gear with its anti-Horthy propaganda, lead by such publicists as Oscar Jaszi and Rusztém Vámbéry.[3] These voices were echoed by Little Entente spokesmen, in particular by Eduard Beneš during his tour of the United States and Canada in 1943.

Fortunately for the people of Hungary and Hungarian immigrants in America, the leadership of the US was not uniformly anti-Hungarian in sentiment. In Washington in particular, some sympathy remained throughout the war, if not for the Hungarian government then for the people of Hungary and Hungarians in general. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, despite his undeserved reputation among Hungarians as a Hungarophobe, was not antagonistic to the Hungarian nation. When Hungary's government declared war on the United States in December of 1941, he was instrumental in delaying a US declaration of war on Hungary, saying that the people of that country had nothing to do with the government that allied itself with Nazi Germany. The US declaration of war

was only issued half-a-year later. It should also be added that Roosevelt supported the idea of restoring the Austro-Hungarian empire in one form or another after the war.[4]

While the US President was not entirely unsympathetic to Hungary and Hungarians, many of his officials were. Among these were Sumner Welles, the Under-Secretary of State; Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of the State Department's journal *Foreign Affairs*; and Alan Cranston who worked in the Foreign Newspapers section of the Office of Wartime Information for a better part of the war. One fairly influential American who was an exception in this respect, and was an avowed supporter of Hungary throughout these years, was J.F. Montgomery.

John Flournoy Montgomery was born in 1878 into an "old-stock" American family. He started his career in sales and business management and, for much of his early adult life, was an executive with various subsidiaries of what later became the giant Nestle Food Company. Throughout the years, he was a supporter of the Democratic Party. In fact, soon after the Democratic electoral victory in 1933, Montgomery resigned from most of his business directorships and accepted President Roosevelt's offer to become the American envoy to Hungary.[5]

From 1933 to 1941, when he was recalled from Budapest, Montgomery kept sending reports to Washington that revealed his sympathies for Hungary and most of her leaders. In fact, for Montgomery, the popular practice in English-speaking countries of labelling Hungary a "backward, feudal" land, was a convenient ex-post-facto justification for the ill-treatment which that country had received in the post-World War I peace settlement. And, he continued to express these views, both in newspaper articles and in State Department circles, after his departure from Budapest. On one occasion at least, Montgomery took on the task of defending Hungary's leaders against allegations made against them by members of the Hungarian émigré left in the American English-language press. His most important act in support of Hungary and its pre-1944 regime, however, was the writing of the book: *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite.* Unfortunately for Hungarians, the book did not appear in print until after the war's conclusion. Accordingly, it could not make an impact on American public opinion during the negotiations in 1945 concerning a post-war settlement in East Central Europe.[6]

In his book, Montgomery denied that Hungary was a "feudal" and "fascist" state, as her detractors would have had the American public believe. He argued that, for much of the time he had been in Budapest, the Hungarian regime strove to maintain a free hand in foreign policy. "Up to the time when Germany and Italy were pushed together by force of events, Hungary could and did balance between the two.... This policy... gave Hungary... considerable liberty of action...." (p. 18). But Montgomery reserved most of his persuasive skills for a condemnation of the treatment that Hungary had received at the end of World War I:

[In 1919-1920] [w]e Americans were ordered to love Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia and to applaud the ill-treatment meted out to Hungarians... We did. We bowed reverently to the fact that one [ethnically] mixed community, Austria-Hungary, was replaced and absorbed by a number of states, three of which,... were no less mixed than the dissected empire had been.... [W]e bowed to this settlement. To be quite exact, we did not care.... If it suited the British and French to put millions of German-Austrians and Hungarians under Czech rule, Hungarians under Rumanian, and Croats under Serbian domination, why should we be squeamish? But having helped our allies to win, we had our share of responsibility in the results of victory. We should not have washed our hands of all the injustice committed....

Even before Hitler shocked us into realizing our blunders, the truth had dawned upon some Americans... Businessmen, having visited first Croatia and then Serbia, or first Transylvania and then old Rumania, would ask... why advanced races had been put under the rule of [relatively] backward ones....

People deprived of their livelihood by their neighbors never even had a hearing. At the same time, those who profited by the victors' arbitrary discrimination showered us with an unceasing flow of propaganda.... the object of which was to keep what had been seized....

Having been American Minister to Hungary from 1933 to 1941, my regular post of observation... was Budapest. It was a unique post because the Magyars,... were always aware of being between the two fires of German and Russian imperialism. During those years, most of us saw only one fire, the German one. Hungary's vision was far ahead of ours. Had we listened to Hungarian statesmen, we should perhaps have been able to limit Stalin's triumph in the hour of Hitler's fall.

[B]etween the two wars,... from my watchtower on the Danube... what I witnessed was a tragic and insoluble conflict between fear and honor, in which fear was bound to win. It is an undeniable fact that on many occasions those who had been treated as stepchildren by the Western powers in 1919 showed more loyalty to the Allied cause than their spoiled favorites did.[7]

In his final condemnation of the post-World War I peace settlement with Hungary, Montgomery asks the pertinent question: "Would it not have been better if we had opposed the arbitrary discrimination indulged in by the surgeons of 1919, who thereby afforded Hitler his most powerful arguments?"[8]

As has been mentioned above, Montgomery's view were rare if not unique among American officials during and immediately after the Second World War. The general attitude to Hungary, and especially to her interwar and wartime regime, was one of hostility and derision. It had to be the outbreak of

an anti-Soviet revolution in Hungary in 1956 that would alter American attitudes to the country and its people.

The re-publication of Montgomery's little-known 1947 book will be welcome news for those who feel that Hungary had too much negative publicity as a result of her participation in the Second World War.

The works reviewed here, despite their varying lengths and differing scholarly qualities, are useful contributions to the subject of the images — and stereotypes — that Hungarians and Americans have of each other. While they close some of the gaps in the literature of this subject, they leave ample room for further research.

NOTES

[1]Géza Jeszenszky, *Az elvesztett presztízs: Magyarország megitélésének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában (1894-1918)* [The lost prestige: the Transformation of Hungary's Image in Great Britain (1894-1918)] (Budapest: Magvetõ, 1986).

[2]Tibor Glant, "The War for Wilson's Ear: Austria-Hungary in Wartime American Propaganda," *Hungarian Studies Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (Spring-Fall, 1993), pp. 25-51.

[3]See my study: "Oscar Jaszi and the Hungarian Problem," in *Oscar Jaszi: Visionary, Reformer and Political Activist*, Dreisziger and Ludanyi eds. (Toronto: *HSR*, 1991), pp. 59-79.

[4]Ignác Romsics, ed., *Wartime American Plans for a New Hungary* (Highland Lakes, N.J.: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1992), pp. 6 and 33.

[5]*The National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Vol. 45 (New York: James T. White and Co., 1962), pp. 134f.

[6]John F. Montgomery, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1947).

[7]*Ibid.*, see the Preface. See also my brief study, "John F. Montgomery and the Image of Hungarians in Wartime North America," in *Tárogató: the Journal of the Hungarian Cultural Society of Vancouver*, Vol. XXIII, no. 5 (May 1996), pp. 39-40.

[8]*Ibid.*

Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. XXIII, No. 2 (Fall, 1996)

Book Reviews

István Nemeskürty. *Nous, les Hongrois.* Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994. 382 p.

Traduit du hongrois, le livre retrace l'histoire des Hongrois dès le IXe s. jusqu'à la prise du pouvoir des communistes, imposés par l'URSS après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Dans l'avant-propos, l'auteur spécifie ses intentions: "Le présent ouvrage est, de par son intention, un récit littéraire, une esquisse de l'évolution de notre essence hongroise". (p. 7) Tout comme la France, la Hongrie est habitée par une nation de penchant littéraire.

Dans l'ordre chronologique, les nombreux chapitres brefs évoquent, à la lumière de témoignages historiques tumultueux et percutants, les grandes périodes de l'histoire hongroise. En outre, au-delà de l'histoire connue, l'auteur renseigne le lecteur sur les faits historiques moins bien connus mais parfois révélateurs. Ainsi, même la plupart des lecteurs hongrois, ignoraient dans ses détails, que Janos Hunyadi, durant la décennie 1430, avait été un "condottiere" en Italie au service de l'empereur ou de Philippo Visconti, duc de Milan. Tout en accumulant les dignités et honneurs, en 1446 il était déjà propriétaire de 4 millions 130 mille arpents! Au total 28 forteresses, 57 villes, 1 000 villages. (p. 113) Toute cette fortune avait été acquise en une décennie.

À côté de ce chef de guerre, dont la victoire sur les Turcs à Belgrade, en 1456, est à l'origine de l'angelus de midi, il est intéressant d'évoquer la famille Zrínyi, défenseurs, elle aussi de l'Europe chrétienne. Suite à la catastrophe de Mohács, en 1526, les XVIe et XVIIe s. seraient marqués, entre autres, par la lutte contre l'occupant turc, ensuite, les autrichiens.

Le comte Miklós Zrínyi, qui maniait le sabre et la plume, incarnait le patriote héroïque, qui était prêt, comme ses ancêtres, à sacrifier tout pour la patrie. La Hongrie, coincée entre l'Empire ottomane et l'Autriche, ne pouvait compter que sur elle-même. En regardant les nations européennes "chrétiennes" Zrínyi conclut qu'aucune d'entre elles ne ferait de sacrifices pour libérer la Hongrie, "bouclier" de l'Europe. Honoré par le toison d'or espagnole, aristocrate cultivé et renseigné, il émettait cette opinion au milieu du XVIIe sur la France: "La nation française, lorsqu'elle n'est pas en guerre pour elle-même, on ne peut pas en attendre grand chose. Les Français, lorsqu'ils sont victorieux, sont insupportables, lorsqu'ils sont misérables, ne valent rien". (p. 185)

Suite à l'expulsion des Turcs en 1686, vient une autre période, celle de Rákóczi, la guerre d'indépendance contre l'Autriche, soutenue par la France. Un siècle et demi plus tard, la révolution de 1848 et la guerre d'indépendance qui suivra, mettra la Hongrie à l'épreuve en affrontant à la fois les armées russe et autrichienne. Le général Lajos Aulich, avait mis l'ordre que voici: "Notre lutte, que nous menons contre deux puissances présomptueuses d'Europe, n'est pas celle de la nationalité, mais celle de la liberté générale contre l'absolutisme". (p. 250)

Le lecteur dirait qu'il s'agit d'une histoire triste de ce peuple dont le territoire de la patrie et de ses membres ont été traités comme une vulgaire marchandise et distribués par les puissances victorieuses de la Première Guerre mondiale à ses voisins par le tristement célèbre traité de Trianon...

Le livre est complété par des renseignements ponctuels et précis sur l'histoire de la Hongrie. Il s'agit d'un livre facile à lire et le lecteur francophone en Europe ou en Amérique du Nord pourrait s'initier ou compléter ses connaissances sur le Hongrois.

Paul Pilisi
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

György Fehér, rédacteur. *Yves de Daruvár.* Budapest: Lakitelek Alapitvány et Antológia Kiadó, 1992. 137 p.

Qu'il soit permis au recenseur de rendre hommage à celui pour qui le destin a donné deux patries à servir: la France et la Hongrie. Sándor Lezsák, directeur de la Fondation Lakitelek a voulu honorer l'engagement infaillible de Yves de Daruvár pour la Hongrie. Ernő Raffay termine l'avant-propos en ces termes: "Chaque ligne d'Yves de Daruvár est imprégné par son engagement envers la cause magyare... et celui qui le lira, l'enfermera dans son coeur." György Fehér, à titre de rédacteur, propose au lecteur la biographie familiale des Daruvár Kacskovich, illustrée par les portraits des ancêtres. Viennent ensuite les extraits de discours, des publications de l'auteur, notamment de son livre intitulé "Le destin dramatique de la Hongrie" (1971), entrecoupés de photos illustrant sa brillante carrière. Les extraits de ses mémoires de guerre, "De Londre à la Tunisie, carnet de route de la France Libre" (1995), retracent l'itinéraire suivi de celui qui deviendra commandeur de la Légion d'honneur, compagnon de la libération et administrateur en chef des affaires d'outre-mer. Le livre, présenté sous un format soigné, se termine par la chronologie d'activités d'Yves de Daruvár au service de la cause magyare.

La personnalité de Daruvár a été bien connue par l'émigration hongroise. À l'automne 1981, ses organisations en Amérique du Nord lui réservaient honneurs, reconnaissances et distinctions. Quel agréable surprise m'attendait à Chicoutimi, quand le regretté Miklos Zay, ami et condisciple de lycée à Paris m'a appris, qu'ils viendront, après presque quarante années de retrouvailles, nous rendre visite. C'est à Chicoutimi qu'Yves de Daruvár m'a dédicacé son livre sur "Le destin dramatique de la Hongrie" ..., en souvenir de sa conférence au Collège du Cardinal Mindszenty de Louvain (Leuven) (de 1972) en Belgique. C'est dans la revue, "Documentation sur l'Europe centrale" de l'Institut de recherche synonyme, fondé par le père István Muzslay S.J., que les nombreuses études d'Yves de Daruvár ont été publiées. Le père Muzslay, qui a tant fait pour la jeunesse estudiantine hongroise de l'Université Catholique de Louvain ainsi que pour la cause hongroise, a été décoré par le gouvernement de Hongrie en 1991. Yves de Daruvár, né à Constantinople d'un père hongrois et d'une mère française, ne sachant pas le hongrois, mais comprenant mieux que quiconque le destin dramatique de ce peuple, a donné un service inestimable au peuple Magyare.

De la Fondation Lakitelek vient cet hommage solennel et le témoignage de vive reconnaissance d'une autre patrie à la fois proche et lointaine...

Paul Pilisi
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

A „Jelcin-dosszié": Szovjet dokumentumok 1956-ról [The Yeltsin File: Soviet Documents on 1956]. Éva Gál, B.A. Hegedűs, György Litván, and János M. Rainer, eds. Budapest: Századvég kiadó and the 56-os Intézet, 1993. 424 pages.

For almost three-and-a-half decades after the Revolution in Hungary in 1956, few people suspected that top secret Soviet documents will be made public in their lifetime concerning this fateful event in the evolution of the Soviet Empire. Then came Gorbachev, *glasnost*, and the collapse of the Soviet system. These developments made possible the release of Soviet documents concerning Hungary in 1956. In fact, in November of 1992 Russian President Boris Yeltsin delivered to Árpád Göncz, his Hungarian counterpart, a file containing nearly 300 pages of such documents.

The "Yeltsin file," as this collection of documents has become known, covers the period from April 1956 to June of 1958. That is, it deals with events in Hungary during the gestation of the revolutionary outbreak, the uprising itself, and the trial and execution of Imre Nagy in 1958 which can be seen as the final act of the drama that had unfolded in Budapest in two years earlier. The file contains a variety of documents. There are diplomatic and party reports on the situation in Hungary, intelligence and military assessments, memoranda of

discussions with Hungarian communist officials, submissions from members of the Hungarian party elite, as well as directives from the powers-to-be in Moscow to Soviet officials dealing with the Hungarian situation. The documents themselves seem to have originated from two archival collections. One of these is the Presidential Archives of the Soviet Union, a repository of historical records that apparently had been established by Gorbachev. This collection housed transcripts of decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as those of the Party's Presidium — earlier known as the Politburo. It also contained the diplomatic, military and intelligence reports that had been directed to these Party organs during 1956-1958. The rest of the documents have come from the archives of the Soviet Union's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This archival collection housed the reports that the then Soviet Ambassador to Hungary, Yuri Andropov had sent to Moscow, as well as Marshall Zhukov's reports on the military aspects of the Hungarian situation.

Even though before the disintegration of the Soviet Union historians had no access to top secret Soviet archival collections, much of the history of the 1956 Revolution in Hungary was well known. Hundreds of books and thousands of shorter works have been written on the subject. Much has been written on the impact of the Revolution on other countries, including the leadership of the Western powers. If there was one aspect of the topic which has not been known extensively before, it has been the deliberations and actions of the Soviet leadership. The documents in the Yeltsin file have helped to clarify to a degree this aspect of the Revolution's history. They do more than this however. They throw considerable light on the issue of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. They indicate, for example, that before the outbreak of trouble in Budapest, the Soviets were suspicious of anti-Soviet activities by the staff of the Yugoslav embassy in the Hungarian capital. And, the documents also show that as soon as the Revolution was crushed by Soviet troops, Yugoslav-Soviet relations once again deteriorated, mainly over the issue of the treatment meted out by the Soviets and their Hungarian quislings to Imre Nagy and his "accomplices." Only at the moment of danger to all communist regimes, at the very end of October and the first days of November, did the Yugoslav and Soviet leadership see eye to eye on the need to reign in the Hungarian experiment in democracy and pluralism as it seemed to pose a great danger to both Soviet and Yugoslav communism.

The documents also reveal that, in most cases and most of the time, the Soviet leadership was not receiving accurate information on the situation in Hungary. Soviet decisions then, were made on the basis of misinformation. No one can answer the question what the Soviet reaction might have been, if it had been based on more accurate assessments of the situation in Hungary. Perhaps there would not have been a second intervention by Soviet troops, and the government of Imre Nagy would have been allowed to go on with its experiment in political pluralism and neutrality. This in turn might have changed the whole history of the Soviet Empire. We will never know. However, the fact that the

Soviet leadership was not getting — in fact, could not obtain — accurate information on developments in Hungary, reveals one of the great weaknesses of the Soviet system.

Evidently, the Yeltsin file is an incomplete one. It is a selection of documents, prepared in haste, from a much larger body of Soviet party and governmental records. It is no more than a sampling of the documentation that existed in two of the archives of the Russian Republic in 1992. Especially regrettable are the gaps in the documentation of the events in Moscow during the end of October, when the momentous decision was taken to crush the revolution in Hungary. The actual document, recording the October 31st decision of the Presidium to send in the Red Army, is there, but not any memoranda that would explain the circumstances of that fateful deed. Nor are there documents in the collection that would throw much additional light on the processes which saw János Kádár selected as Hungary's new communist leader. Very few of the documents reveal much about the Soviet Union's dealings with other great powers concerning the problems in Hungary. On the other hand, the Yeltsin file confirms many historical conjectures regarding the role of the Soviets in controlling or trying to control developments in Hungary before, during, and after the uprising. It also underlines the role that Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia and his advisers had played in the decision to crush the revolution. And the file clarifies the aggressive role that the Soviets assumed in the process of exacting retribution from the Hungarian people for participating in an anti-communist (and, anti-Soviet) uprising.

Almost as fast as the collection had been selected in Moscow, the Hungarians — in particular the staff of the Institute for the Study of 1956 — translated and prepared the documents for publication. Fortunately, they had done a credible job. The documents are amply annotated, and errors or misinformation in them are set right in the footnotes. And the collection is supplied with a comprehensive and informative introduction by historian György Litván, the Institute's director.

N.F. Dreisziger
Royal Military College of Canada

NOTES

A few of the documents that appear in *A "Jelcin-dosszié"* have been published in English, in János M. Rainer, ed., "1956 — The Other Side of the Story, Five Documents from the Yeltsin File" *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (Spring 1993), pp. 100-114.

The literature of the 1956 revolution in Hungary is enormous. One standard treatment of it in Hungarian is Péter Gosztonyi, *1956: A Magyar forradalom története* [1956: The History of the Hungarian Revolution] (Munich: Griff, 1981). A monograph that covers most of the "age of communism" in Hungary is Bennett Kovrig, *Communism in Hungary: From Kun to Kádár* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1979). A

massive collection of papers dealing with the impact of the revolution on the world is *The First War between Socialist States: The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and its Impact* B.K. Kiraly, B. Lotze and N.F. Dreisziger, eds. (New York: Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1984). A collection of essays that deals with one of the impact of the Revolution on Canada — the coming of the 1956 refugees — is the book *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada,* Robert H. Keyserlingk, ed. (Toronto: York Lane Press, 1993).

An earlier collection of papers dealing with the revolution in Hungary — its origins, events and aftermath — is still available: *The Hungarian Revolution Twenty Years After: Selected Papers and Perspectives* (Ottawa, 1976). To order this 140-page paperback volume, send a cheque for $10.00 (payable to the Hungarian Studies Review) to N.F. Dreisziger, Department of History, ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA, PO BOX 17000 STN FORCES, KINGSTON ON K7K 7B4 CANADA. (Please print the last three lines of the address in capital letters, as given here).

For historian András D. Bán's informal review of Gyula Juhász's book, *A történész józansága* [The soberness of the historian] (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1993), see the section "In Place of an Obituary," pp. 126f.

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In Place of Obituaries: Remembering Robert Blumstock, Gyula Juhász, and Andrea Horváth.

In the 1970s and the 1980s occasionally obituaries appeared in our journal, marking the passing of one or another member of our editorial advisory board, or a stalwart contributor. We have not published such notices in the past several years. The reason for this was not the absence of death in the *HSR*'s circle of friends and associates. In fact, in the period in question, we lost three people who have had an impact on our journal in one way or another. These were sociologist Robert Blumstock, historian Gyula Juhász, and linguist Andrea Horváth.

When Robert Blumstock died in April of 1995, the *HSR* lost a friend and editorial colleague who had cooperated with the journal's principal editors for nearly two decades. He had come to Canada from his native United States in 1964 to teach sociology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. It was Professor Blumstock's interest in Hungary, the birthplace of his mother, that brought him in contact with our journal. He also took a leading role in the establishment and early work of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada, and served as President of that organization for a term. His publications also tended to deal with Hungarian or Hungarian-Canadian topics. One of the latter was his edited volume: *Békevár: Working Papers on a Canadian Prairie Community* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979). Among his other publications were a half-dozen chapters in books, a dozen articles in scholarly journals, and a great many conference papers and short, popular writings. He would often appear in print in the local newspapers, commenting on some public controversy. On one occasion, he had half-seriously recommended, in one of the Hamilton dailies, that Canada adopt Hungarian as its official language. He argued that this would make Canada less vulnerable to the impact of American mass culture and would also solve the problem of linguistic sexism: as is well-known, Magyar is gender-neutral. The suggestion was a reflection of Bob Blumstock's sense of humour.

Robert Blumstock had fought a long battle with cancer. Even though he was ill during the last several years of his life, he continued to teach, to participate in academic life — he had planned to attend a Hungarian studies conference in Rome during the last days of his life — and to research and write. His book

on the *Jewish Question in Hungary, 1848-1948* was accepted for publication not long before his untimely passing.

* * *

Gyula Juhász was a prominent historian and academic administrator in the Hungary of the 1960s to the early 1990s. He had not participated in our journal's editorial work, nevertheless he contributed to the *HSR*'s well-being nearly a decade ago when, as chief executive officer of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár or National Széchényi Library of Hungary, he had helped to cement the link between the *HSR* and his institution. Because Gyula Juhász's list of publications would take pages to reproduce, it will have to suffice to enumerate only his most prominent books: *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája, 1939-1941* [The Foreign Policies of the Teleki Government, 1939-1941] (1964); *Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1919-1945* (1979); *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], vol. V of the series *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához, 1936-1945*) [Diplomatic documents on Hungary's foreign policy, 1936-1945] (1982); *A háború és Magyarország, 1938-1945* [The War and Hungary, 1938-1945] (1986). His last book, *A történész józansága* [The soberness of the historian] (1994), was published posthumously. (For comments on this book, see below, pp. 127-128.)

* * *

Andrea Horváth's passing is perhaps the most difficult for us to accept and report. The reason for this is not the fact that she had been a long-term associate of the journal. Indeed, fate had prevented Andrea from having a chance to offer such help to the *HSR*. She had hardly passed her final doctoral examination when the diagnosis of a potentially incurable disease was made. For some time before then she had participated in our work, the work of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada, and had been close to the journal, both in the figurative and literal sense of that word: she often used the *HSR*'s office at the University of Toronto to study or to receive her students. Her passing is particularly painful because it comes at a time when scholars in the field of Hungarian studies — many of whom are contemplating retirement within a decade — often lament that there are very few young people to follow in their academic footsteps.

N.F. Dreisziger

Others remember Robert Blumstock:

Bob Blumstock came to McMaster in 1964. His special fields of sociology — ethnicity, ideology, and religion — enriched the Department's course offerings. From the beginning, he showed a strong interest in the development of the Department and played a key role in the evolution of the undergraduate and graduate programmes. By 1968, he had become the Department Chair, and during this time he saw the Ph.D. programme approved and the first of a long line of students accepted into the programme. He was instrumental in attracting foreign students to McMaster, especially from Hungary, and he contributed to the study of comparative industrial studies.

The only child of Jewish immigrants to New York from Hungary, he attended City College of New York for his B.A. and M.A. (1957), then the University of Oregon... When he obtained his doctorate in 1964, he had already been teaching for two years at the University of Connecticut; from there, he came to McMaster. The culture of civility which he saw here, and which he believed to be quintessentially Canadian, suited him just fine; so he became a citizen and remained at McMaster for the rest of his career.

During the first third of his tenure at McMaster, Bob enjoyed informal contacts with students and colleagues. He talked to people in the hall, at lunch, wherever. He and his wife, Ruth, were generous hosts for parties in their home for students, colleagues, friends, and visitors to the Department....

He was a contributing author and editor of two books, a half-dozen book chapters, a dozen articles in refereed journals, and innumerable works in the popular press. He was past Vice-President and President of the Hungarian Studies Association... He was visiting professor at Attila Jozsef University in Szeged in 1990; visiting lecturer at Karl Marx University in Budapest in 1972; and at the University of Lethbridge in 1988.

He was a neo-liberal long before it became fashionable to be one. He knew about Marxism, not just as a field of study, but as only someone who has lived in a Marxist state can know it; for years before the implosion of socialism in Eastern Europe, he had been commenting on the "irrelevance of ideology" for that region in both English-language and Magyar scholarly journals and books. His ongoing work on civil religion, on ideology, and on contemporary trends in Eastern Europe reflected that knowledge; so did the countless Hungarian refugees who were welcomed, given practical aid, and offered friendship.

During the latter part of his career, his substantive interests shifted somewhat and focused on Hungarian-Jewish intellectuals in the interwar period,... Although very ill for many years, he continued working on his research projects: a paper on values in post-communist Europe...; another, on Herzl and Heltai before Zionism, was to be presented at a conference in Rome just days after he died...

He had a gift for satire, an unerring eye for sacred cows, a fine sense of the ridiculous. He was a respected lecturer and supervisor. "His" graduate students and others who worked with him or knew him will remember a man who took pains to see them through, who acted like a catharine-wheel of sparking ideas, who brought humour and friendship to the academic environment. We have lost the wit, the insights and the advice that were his hallmarks.

Frank E. Jones, Roy W. Hornosty, and David Lewis
Department of Sociology, McMaster University

And Gyula Juhász:

The book, *A történész józansága* [The soberness of the historian], is a mirror image of Professor Juhász's work of a lifetime, it is a brief and somewhat incomplete summary of his career. It consists of three parts: the first contains scholarly studies, the second popular articles, and the third, interviews that he had given. If we had to categorize his writings by subject, three groupings would emerge as well: the development of Hungarian diplomacy between the two world wars and particularly during the second and, within this theme, especially Anglo-Hungarian relations; national self-awareness, the knowledge of things Hungarian, and the question of "who is a Hungarian?"; and last, the related issue of intellectual and cultural life between the wars and during World War II. The book at hand contains first rate studies relating to all three of these themes. And in every one of these there is revealed Gyula Juhász's basic approach as a historian: one that is free of emotionalism, that places emphasis on archival sources, and an approach that is strictly scholarly....

For me, the most exciting writings [in this book] were those that explored the evolution of Anglo-Hungarian relations. These relations became most serious during the Second World War, especially after 1943 when through diplomatic and other channels secret negotiations started between the two countries. The theme of these discussions was exploring the possibility of Hungary's departure from the war and the avoidance of a German and, in time the increasingly obvious prosect of a Russian occupation. We know the outcome: we were not able to avoid either a German or a Russian occupation.

The question why we were unsuccessful in this finds possible answers in several of Juhász's studies. I will mention only three, the one about the foreign policy of Count Teleki, the other about the Second Vienna Award, and the third about Hungarian revisionism. These writings depict Hungary's most important statesmen: Pál Teleki, whose diplomatic orientation and efforts to keep Hungary neutral in the war] proved bankrupt [in the spring of 1941], and who — no

longer able to shoulder the pressure brought upon him by the Germans — committed suicide.... But beyond Teleki, these writings trace the politics of László Bárdossy. Yes, Bárdossy, who, contrary to papular belief, was not a pro-German politician from the beginning. And, of course, there is Miklós Kállay and his increasingly desperate efforts to get out of the war.... And, above all, there is Miklós Horthy. The very Horthy whose politics are subject of lively debate in the media of our days, and whose image often finds overly favourable or excessively unfavourable depiction depending on the political tastes of his advocates or critics. A real historian, however, cannot be partial.... He or she can like or dislike the *dramatis personae* [of his works], he or she must judge them with unclouded intellect, and on the basis of the facts. What also emerges from Gyula Juhász's book, is an estimate of in what way and to what extent Horthy was responsible for what happened in Hungary between 1920 and 1945. In the interview entitled "the need for accounting," which appeared originally on the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust, deals with the question how it was possible that in May and the early summer of 1944 the Germans were able to deport in short order the majority of rural Hungary's Jews, some 435,000 people.

That Horthy shouldered a great deal of the responsibility for this tragedy, we know and cannot disregard. But before we look for scapegoats, it does not hurt to look at the facts and the archival and other sources. What had transpired during the discussions between Hitler and Horthy at Klessheim on March 18, 1944? What is it that we know for sure about these discussions, and what is it that we still don't? What prompted Horthy to stop the deportation of the Jews of Budapest in July of 1944?...

These are some of the questions to which Juhász had sought answers in his works. What we can also learn from the papers in this volume is... that we must take care to examine historical events from various points of view, and that we must travel a long road before we can come to the drawing of conclusions....

Excerpts from a speech by András D. Bán, made on the occasion of the launching of Gyula Juhász's posthumous book: *A történész józansága* [The soberness of the historian] (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1993), 17 Feb. 1994. Translation by N.F. Dreisziger. An abbreviated version of Bán's speech was published in *Magyar Nemzet* [The Hungarian Nation] on 11 Jan. 1994.