

Anti-Nazi Politics in Hungary during the Second World War

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Abstract

It is not easy to summarize Hungarian anti-Nazi politics in a short paper. The difficulties with which one is faced do not stem from the political effectiveness of these groups, however, but rather from the fragmentation of anti-Nazi or anti-German political forces in Hungary. Methodological questions also arise concerning anti-Nazism, anti-Fascism, anti-Imperialism and anti-German attitudes, which terms are commonly used as synonyms, albeit all four have distinct meanings, as we will see (Pócs, 2018, p. 1). Furthermore, the social reception of Nazi Germany was frequently modified in Hungary. During the years of the territorial revisions (1938–1941), when Hitler allowed Hungary to reannex some territories which had been lost after the First World War,² the German-led “New Europe” gained greater acceptance in both Hungarian society and political life; this changed just a few years later, specifically after the defeat of the Hungarian and German Corps at Voronezh (January 1943). From that time on, more and more Hungarians started to worry about the outcome of the war (Juhász, 1983, p. 104). The objective of the present paper is an overview of the most important political forces and intellectual milieus of the country that eventually stood up to German expansionism or to the state ideology of the Third Reich.

After the Great War, following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungary regained its independence, which it had lost centuries earlier. However, the price of freedom was extremely high. By the terms of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), the country lost at least two-thirds of its former territory and two-thirds of its inhabitants, including more than three million Hungarians, the majority of whom now found themselves living in Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia from 1929), and Austria. In the wake of the Democratic Revolution of 1918 and the 133 days of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, a rightist regime came into power in the autumn of 1919. The new political system, named after the Regent, Miklós Horthy, developed an extensive body of revisionist propaganda supporting the historical borders of Hungary. The Horthy system lasted a quarter of a century, until 15 October 1944, when the Arrow Cross Party assumed power following a coup aided by the German invaders.

In the years 1918/19–1945, Hungarian foreign policy was torn between a dichotomy: until the total collapse in 1945, it could not and did not want to let go of the dream of restoring Saint Stephen's Hungary, however all the more rational foreign policy makers were well aware that "this grand objective could only be achieved with the help of a great power" (Pritz, 2011, p. 98). In the Horthy era, relations between Germany and Hungary were not based on common ideological grounds, despite the much-mentioned common war experience and shared elements of the cultural heritage. These declarations meant more for the politicians of the small Hungarian state, who still tried to position themselves as the representatives of an empire. But during the 1920s, the politics of the liberal Weimar Republic were in sharp contrast to the ardent Hungarian revisionist propaganda (Zeidler, 2009), while after 1933, Hitler's concept of the German-led *Südostraum* caused anxiety in Budapest, especially after the Anschluss (1938). However, from the nineteen-thirties Hungary and Germany had a common aim which was stronger than any differences; namely, both wanted to destroy the Versailles Treaty system. In this collaboration the Third Reich naturally played the main role, while Hungary, with its focus on territorial revisionism, became increasingly – and dangerously – dependent on Berlin. This was the main reason why Hungary joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in January 1939, and why the Hungarian government let the *Volksbund* be the exclusive representative of Germans

1 The present study was supported by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (PD 124292).

2 The southern part of Upper Hungary, Carpathian Ruthenia, Northern Transylvania, and some Southern Provinces were annexed to Hungary between 1938 and 1941.

in the country; indeed, it explains why the country finally acceded to the Tripartite Pact in November 1940. Subsequently, Germany's increasing economic and ideological influence – and the political and military demands of the war – played a steadily greater role.

To understand the Hungarian case, it has to be emphasized that neither the ruling Unity Party (UP) nor the government had a single template for the optimal development of relations with Nazi Germany. At the end of the nineteen-thirties, Hungarian anti-Nazism enjoyed support from the highest level of politics. Directly, the key player in these efforts was the Prime Minister, Pál Teleki (February 1939 – April 1941), who encouraged rightist anti-Nazi organizations, parties and campaigns as competition for the surgent pro-Nazi groupings in Hungary (Paksa, 2013, pp. 156–230).³ Teleki strove to combine pacific revisionist aims with a strong focus on maintaining the country's independence. In consequence, on the one hand, Hungary regained Subcarpathia in mid-March 1939, but on the other it did not take part in the German attack on Poland in September of the same year, and indeed accepted masses of Polish refugees. The administrative tasks inherent in this sensitive issue were handled by József Antall, the Commissioner for War Refugees at the Interior Ministry. He co-operated with Henryk Sławik, a Polish diplomat and journalist who was later arrested by the Germans and died in a concentration camp. Antall and Sławik saved more ten thousand Poles and Jews through the issuance of falsified protective documents. Teleki also acquiesced to the functioning of a Polish-language secondary school in Balatonboglár, which was coordinated by Béla Varga, a priest and politician associated with the Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (hereinafter referred to as the Smallholders Party or Smallholders for short; author's note). Therefore, Teleki tried to find an alternative for Hungary's imbalanced foreign policy, fundamentally based on loyalty to Germany, as it was by no means easy to retain Berlin's support for the regaining of territories on the one hand, while officially staying out of the war on the other. Finally, under the pressure of the Yugoslav crisis in April 1941, Teleki committed suicide (Ablonczy, 2006, pp. 174–235). The new Prime Minister, László Bárdossy, was an adherent of the German alliance, and thus Hungary joined the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Miklós Kállay, who replaced Bárdossy as Prime Minister in March 1942, received the support of Hungarian conservative, Christian and liberal political milieus. The objective of Kállay's appointment was to lead the country out of the war while retaining the re-annexed territories. And one additional task was made crystal-clear: Russian occupation was

3 The right wing Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement (led by Ferenc Szálasi) was the largest Hungarian pro-Nazi grouping at the outbreak of the Second World War.

to be avoided at any cost. Kállay made numerous peace overtures to the Western Allies, however without success (Kanski, 2018, p. 95; Joó, 2008). Tragically, these attempts were enough for Hitler to decide that Hungary must be occupied, and, on 19 March 1944, German units implemented Operation “Margarethe,” during which they captured key Hungarian facilities and extended control throughout the country. Although Horthy did not resign, he was forced to appoint his former ambassador to Berlin, the pro-German Döme Sztójay, as Prime Minister. The Hungarian administrative authorities began to serve Germany’s war aims with considerably greater attention, and this led, among others, to the deportation of the majority of the country’s Jews. In consequence, by war’s end the leading anti-Nazi powers regarded Hungary not as an occupied country but as a satellite (Pritz, 2011, p. 103).

The Voice of the Masses

Even a quick look at the Hungarian political scene in the final years of the Second World War is enough to realize that anti-Nazi forces made some attempts at co-operation. As an important step, in July 1943 the Smallholders Party entered a collaboration arrangement with the Social Democratic Party. The two groupings aimed to coordinate their anti-German propaganda and emphasized the importance of freedom rights. By that time, the Social Democrats supported the Anglo-American orientation and demonstrated a particular interest in the Beveridge Report, which came to be recognized as a reference point for the modern Western Welfare State (Cora, 2013). Their new Secretary General, Ferenc Szeder, trusted in Horthy’s good will vis-à-vis the right-wing parties. The Board of the Social Democrats thought that they would play a central role in the political life of Hungary after the war, possibly even without the radicals. Like many other anti-Nazi political groupings in Hungary, they co-operated with the Communist party only during the German occupation, although there were some Communists at various positions of their organization (Varga, 1999, pp. 52–56, 143–149).

The anti-Nazi conservatives were led by the most talented Hungarian politician of the inter-war period, István Bethlen. As a former Prime Minister (1921–1931), he organized them into the National Social Club (Magyar Nemzeti Társaskör) at the beginning of 1943. A few months later, he established co-operation with the liberals (Károly Rassay) and set up the Democratic Civic Alliance (Demokratikus Polgári Szövetség). Both conservatives and liberals underlined the importance of Parliament, freedom rights, and the private ownership of property. They rejected all and any dictatorial tendencies and radicalism, including Communism (Romsics, 1991, pp. 402–429). Some Christian milieus had similar concepts, but they prepared for deeper social and political reform based on Catholic

corporatism, at least after the summer of 1943 (Klestenitz, Petrás & Soós, 2019). However, the fates of the leaders of these groupings are symbolic. István Bethlen was taken away by the Soviets in 1945 and died in a prison hospital in Moscow one year later. Károly Rassay was deported by the Nazis to Mauthausen in 1944, and although he returned, he no longer played a role in Hungarian political life. The spiritual leader of the Christian movement, the Catholic Bishop Vilmos Apor, made concerted efforts to rescue young women from Soviet soldiers in March 1945. During one such attempt he was shot, and he died in April of the same year, by which time the whole country had been occupied by the Soviet Red Army. A few years later, the entirety of political power was in the hands of the Communists.

Naturally, not only professional politicians worried about German expansionism. Among the most consistently anti-German were the *népi* writers, an influential Hungarian intellectual community that was active throughout the 20th century.⁴ The *népis* followed a “third way” ideology (a path between socialism and capitalism), and intended to emancipate the Hungarian peasantry. An important *népi* writer, László Németh, formulated the theory of “quality-socialism” as a distinctly Hungarian solution to social problems. Another key figure, Ferenc Erdei, followed a pragmatic approach to the Soviet model (after 1943), while a third politician, Imre Kovács, propagated civic democratism. Others still were strongly stimulated by racialism, anti-Semitism or étatism. However, all *népis* considered Germans – whether within or without Hungary – as dangerous for the country. In their writings they questioned demographical, economic and social trends, and focused on the trans-Danubian “Schwabisch” economic expansion which they associated in part with Nazi foreign policy (Papp, 2012, pp. 91–173; Bognár, 2012).

The Hungarian peasantry were not unified in their stance towards Nazi Germany. In the absence of contemporary sources, their approach cannot be explored in depth, however there is no doubt that it depended on the prosperity of agriculture, the current war situation, and also on ethnicity. The Smallholders Party had the landowning peasantry in its name, but it returned barely any Members of Parliament from this social group. Most of its elected representatives followed a cautious anti-German policy. The Smallholders Party lost many voters in the 1939 elections, in which pro-Nazi right-wing parties gained a strong majority. The National Peasant Party, a development of the *népi* movement, focused on the agrarian proletaires, however it was able to take a part in elections only after the

4 Here I feel obliged to add another brief terminological note, for *népi* is commonly translated as “populist.” In my opinion, this phrasing is insufficiently exact. Populism is a much-debated phenomenon, and its meaning has still not been fully clarified. Therefore, I prefer to use the Hungarian *népi* [“originated from the folk”] (Bartha, 2017, pp. 13–46).

Soviet occupation. Another organization, the Hungarian Peasant Union, was formed in autumn 1941 by Smallholder and governmental politicians. Two years later, the Union established an agrarian workers' department headed by a future Communist Prime Minister, István Dobi. According to numerous memoirs, it propagated anti-Nazism in the countryside, however this statement can neither be verified nor contradicted (Szeredi, 2014, pp. 139–149).

From Margin to Canon

After 1945, the sensitive political question of the relationship with Nazi Germany became an ideological issue of great importance. The “anti-Fascist paradigm” was used as a master narrative everywhere behind the Iron Curtain, forming the doctrinal backbone of a continuous ideological and political struggle led by at least a section of the Communists (Kšičan et al., 2012). In Hungary, Gyula Kállai played an important role in fabricating and disseminating this interpretation. Kállai, a Communist, had been involved in the resistance during the Second World War. Post-war, he became an influential politician, while later, following the events of 1956, he rose to prominence as the leading ideologist of the Kádár regime (1956–1989). In his highly popular book, entitled *The Hungarian Independence Movement*, Kállai combined his own recollections with a historical commentary, at the same time expertly omitting many uncomfortable facts. For example, he failed to present the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 or the cordial relations existing between Germany and the Soviet Union before June 1941 in any greater detail, and passed over the non-Communist anti-Nazi organizations and their activities (Kállai, 1965).

For this reason, the Hungarian anti-Fascist master narrative started only with the autumn of 1941, when anti-war movements began to emerge in the capital. The first demonstration was held at Batthyány's sanctuary lamp on 6 October 1941,⁵ while another was organized at Kerepesi Cemetery, at the burial place of the martyrs of 1848–49, on 1 November 1941 (Pintér, 1986, p. 23). At Christmas 1941, the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party (*Népszava*) published a special anti-war issue. Articles for this edition were written not only by left wing columnists, but also, among others, by Gyula Szekfű, an eminent conservative historian, and Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, one of the leaders of the Smallholders Party (*Népszava*, 1941, 25 September). The next step was the creation of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee in 1942. This was formally established as

5 Lajos Batthyány was the first Prime Minister of Hungary. He was executed on 6 October 1849 in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1848–1849.

a commemorative council in preparation for the centenary of the Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1848–49. However, it also advocated national independence and opposed the ever-closer alliance with Germany. On 15 March 1942, representatives of the Committee wreathed the statue of the poet Sándor Petőfi in Budapest. This silent act of remembrance rapidly turned into a mass demonstration which gathered some ten thousand participants from diverse parties, associations, and social groups; a couple of dozen communists were arrested by the police (Pintér, 1986, p. 24). It should be stressed here that the Communists were by no means the sole organizers and members of the “People’s Front” that was born of these protests, for it also included Social Democrats, Smallholders, liberals, racialists and conservatives. Further, recent research demonstrates that the British Special Operations Executive also lent its support to the Front’s activities (Szelke, 2016, pp. 163–166). And, finally, it was not the ideology of anti-Fascism but rather the historical heritage of the anti-German struggle for independence that played a pivotal role in delivering the anti-Nazi or anti-German political message in Hungary.

But even the Communists had not been unified in Hungary in the inter-war period. And, until the very last months of the Second World War, the Moscow-oriented group (led by Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas et alia) was the weakest link in the Communist chain. Two important “factions” must be mentioned, both of which were liquidated after the war by Rákosi. The first, the grouping of Aladár Weissshaus, was attacked by both the Social Democrats and the Communists. Weissshaus’ followers propagated a sui generis anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist union for the nations of Central Europe. They attempted to combine socialism with nationalism; some had even been members of right wing parties towards the end of the 1930s (Párkányi István, 1945). A few years later, however, in 1944, Weissshaus and his followers tried to organize a resistance movement in the factories (Gadanecz & Gadanecz, 1993). Another important faction was led by Pál Demény, who accepted the control of Moscow, but attacked Rákosi and his supporters, considering them unfit for creating a Hungarian template of socialism. The *Deményists* demanded effective social policies, extensive land reform, and the nationalization of means of production. Interestingly, while Demény used the anti-Jewish laws to achieve financial profit, in 1944 he invested the proceeds in buying weapons and helping save Jews (Demény, 1983; Demény, 1988, pp. 107–151).

Resistance or Self-Defense?

The heterogeneous Jewry – if we may use this essentialist term et al⁶ – naturally rejected Nazism, however some compromises were debated, especially during the German occupation of Hungary in 1944.⁷ Like other conservatives and liberals, the assimilated (Neolog) Jews in the main supported the Anglo-American orientation, while Communists of Jewish origin (who had no Jewish identity) were focused on the Soviet Union. There was also a small and much fragmented group of Zionists; these activists had broad international connections and targeted the creation of a separate Jewish State. Although they were divided into conservative-civic, moderate left wing and ultraradical Marxist groups, they helped save many lives in 1944; this was due to the fact that while the Zionists had only a few thousand conspirators, they were by far the most active milieu of the Jewish community – especially in the resistance.

After the breakout of the Second World War, the ranks of the Hungarian Zionists were reinforced by Jewish refugees originating mainly from Poland, but also from Slovakia and Germany. In all, by the end of 1943 there were some 15,000 Jewish escapees in Hungary. At the time of the territorial revisions, that is between 1938 and 1941, other notable Zionist groups had also found themselves in the country. In Transylvania, the leftist *Ichud* was particularly strong, since Subcarpathia and Upper Hungary were a hotbed of left wing (*Dror*, *Makkabi Hacair*), right wing (*Betar*), and religious (*Mizrachi*) activism. Due to the obligatory labor service, which rapidly decimated the Hungarian Jews, the newcomers often took the lead in Zionist cells in the country. Following the Polish example, they built bunkers, legalized themselves with false papers, and provided volunteers with support to move abroad. In the wake of the German occupation, the Hungarian Zionist Association was disbanded and superseded by the Hungarian Jewish Council. The Zionists worked in close co-operation with the Budapest representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, saving lives with falsified documents, while later, after the Arrow Cross coup, they also made use of Arrow Cross Party uniforms.⁸ Nevertheless, the Zionists were always hesitant whether to rescue each and every persecutee, or simply to provide support to their comrades.

6 Regarding questions of semantics and methodology: Gyáni, 2013, pp. 213–279.

7 Perhaps best-known is the “Kasztner train,” which in June 1944 ferried 1,600 Jews from Hungary to Switzerland after lengthy negotiations with corrupt ss officers. Another example is the Hungarian Jewish Council, a German-controlled board which tried to protect local Jews through legal channels (Kádár, Schmidt Van Der Zanden & Vági, 2014, pp. 530–540).

8 The various parties set up by Szálasi were routinely banned and then re-established under different names. For purposes of clarity, I have used the most common name – the Arrow Cross Party.

Initially, they focused exclusively on the latter, but during the German occupation – and especially after the coup of 15–16 October 1944 – they engaged in co-operation with the Communists and also helped non-Zionist Jews (Novák, 2007).

A Forgotten Story

In contrast to the Communist and Zionist movements, the organizations of the Hungarian racialists were strongly present in the official social and political life of the Horthy era (Gyurgyák, 2012, pp. 17–51).⁹ This is the reason why they were forgotten after the war, even though some of their representatives had opposed Nazism already before the conflict. Anti-German Hungarian racialists propagated a “total racialism” that was aimed against Nazism, Bolshevism and the Jewry, and also called for the dissimilation of Hungarian Germans. One of these organizations was the True-Born [Törzsökös] Hungarians. The True-Borns were established in November 1938 and soon started publishing a journal, *Sárkány* [Dragon]. They did not support Prime Minister Béla Imrédy (May 1938 – February 1939) and his Movement of Hungarian Life, since they aimed at deeper social reforms (including a radical land reform). As a social organization they were not connected to any of the mainstream political parties, however certain governmental (Gusztáv Szabó), Smallholder (Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky) and Social Democrat (Ferenc Szeder) politicians – as well as prominent members of the Hungarian intelligentsia – sympathized with their cause (Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, 1939, p. 3).¹⁰

Another important racist grouping was the Association of Turanian Hunters. Established in the early nineteen-twenties, the Association experienced considerable ideological change, while during the Second World War it “operated as a mixture of a militia, a sports association, an intelligence service, and an illegal anti-German organization” (Ablonczy, 2016, p. 164). The Turanian Hunters viewed themselves as providing defense against “alien elements” and supported Regent Horthy. Following the German occupation, the organization was suppressed by the Ministry of the Interior, and many of its members joined the Hungarian resistance. In fact, towards the end of 1944 a number of “Turanians” held senior

9 Racialism has to be distinguished from racism. Racist ideologies were always strictly based on biologism (see the central role of blood in Nazism), for racialists – in Hungarian: “fajvédők” [defenders of the race] – considered race as the product of history and culture, albeit they used biological metaphors and their terminology was not always consistent.

10 To give but a few examples: Dezső Szabó, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Aladár Baráti Huszár, Zsigmond Móricz, János Kodolányi, Lajos Zilahy, Péter Veres and Géza Fėja (*Ujság*, 1939, no. 8, 13 January).

positions in KISKA XIII/1, one of the largest and the most effective military forces co-operating with the partisans in besieged Budapest. Among them was Imre Kapocsfy, a company commander delegated to KISKA XIII/1 by Ferenc Kiss (also from the Turanian Hunters, he worked closely with the Hungarian National Uprising Liberation Committee, the main organization of the Hungarian underground movement), and Tivadar Horváth, who served in the “Ragged Guard” and received the National Defense Cross. Both Kapocsfy and Horváth participated in the armed resistance in the closing stages of the war (Bartha, 2020, pp. 285–290).

In 1939, the “Ragged Guard,” which had initially been established as a rightist territorial militia in 1919, was reorganized and fought in Upper Hungary and in Czechoslovakia. However, some Ragged Guardsmen professed an aversion not only towards the Slovaks, Czechs, Romanians and Jews, but also towards Germans. In mid-September 1939, they wrote a lead article in the Journal of the Racialist Association, *Sorakozó* [Lining up], in which they recalled anti-German Hungarian heroes and paid tribute to Poland, then under German attack (*Sorakozó*, 15 September 1939, p. 1). Interestingly, in July 1939 some members of the Ragged Guards had made a clandestine crossing of the Polish-Hungarian border and proceeded to Sławsko, where they tried to organize hundreds of Hungarian volunteers in co-operation with Polish officers. The plan ultimately failed, mainly due to the Hungarian Nazis, who presented it as a scandal in the Hungarian Parliament.¹¹

By the end of the nineteen-thirties, and certainly by the time of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact,¹² “total racialism” was well-organized in Hungary. The following is a non-exhaustive list of the most important organizations: the Hungarian Fraternal Community (Magyar Testvéri Közösség), the National Association of Hungarian Racialists (Magyar Fajvédők Országos Szövetsége), the True-Born Hungarians (Törzsökös Magyarok), the Association of Turanian Hunters (Turáni Vadászok Országos Egyesülete), the Ragged Guard (Rongyos Gárda), the National Camp (Nemzeti Tábor), the National Defense Association (Nemzetvédelmi Szövetség), and the Combatants’ Association (Tűzharcos Szövetség). Sooner or later, these right wing parties and organizations turned against Nazi Germany. Some became anti-Nazi only during the final part of the war, while others established themselves as rivals of the pro-German Arrow Cross Party. It should also be mentioned that, during the years of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Hungarian pro-Nazis kept their eyes not only on Berlin but also on Moscow. The Arrow Cross press quieted down

11 The attempt was organized by Kálmán Zsabka, a well-known right wing anti-German activist, actor, poet, director, and producer (Bartha, Pócs & Szécsényi, 2019, p. 169).

12 For a more recent analysis of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, see: Mitrovits, 2020.

its anti-Bolshevik propaganda and instead strove to show some understanding for the Soviet Union, among others by celebrating the career of Marshal Voroshilov (*Magyarság*, 30 August 1939, p. 6).¹³

Resistance during the German Occupation

The Hungarian resistance, similarly to other European underground organizations, was highly fragmented and had very little time to prepare following the initial German occupation of the country on 19 March 1944. During the first period of the occupation there was a large number of groupings of various sizes which often operated in rivalry to each other, especially as there was no common command or control (ő. e. 682 fond. 1). These disparate factions produced false documents, rescued persecutees, published illegal papers, and generally waited for the uprising. First and foremost, however, the Hungarian resistance focused on propaganda activities, striving to convince Horthy that he should abandon the German alliance and lead Hungary out of the conflict, which was commonly viewed as pointless. An umbrella organization of the underground, the Magyar Front, was established in May 1944. It included the Communist Party (Békepárt), the Social Democratic Party, the Smallholders Party, the legitimists (monarchists), and later also the National Peasant Party (Korom, 1994). A Social Democrat politician, Árpád Szakasits, was chosen as head of its Administrative Committee. Naturally, these groupings had very different ideas for post-war Hungary, while their internal conflicts only served to weaken the resistance. Another problem was that the Magyar Front gained some measure of government support September 1944, whereas Horthy was highly mistrustful of the Communists, who in turn did not trust him (Harsányi, 1969, pp. 523–524). In consequence, the government refrained from providing the underground with arms and munitions.

Horthy aimed to switch sides to the Allies with the help of his innermost circle. Towards the end of August 1944, seeing that Romania had successfully withdrawn from the German alliance, he decided it was time for Hungary to follow suit, and proceeded to appoint a government under General Géza Lakatos. The new Prime Minister attempted to implement the Hungarian exit with great caution and mainly through the use of diplomacy, but, being a high ranking officer, he knew very well that a loyal armed force would be essential for the achievement of his aims. Lakatos

¹³ Such “co-operation” could be initiated by either the left or the right. For instance, in 1940 – during the German occupation – the Norwegian Communist Party demanded peace and collaboration with Berlin, and also called for the abdication of the King of Norway (*Wieviorka*, 2019, p. 10).

therefore established the Home Guard (Nemzetőrség), a militia which was officially tasked with securing the hinterland for the fighting troops by preventing sabotage and suppressing partisan activities (*Honvédségi Közlöny*, 27 September 1944, p. 1). In reality, however, the Home Guard was to assist in the takeover of German-occupied Hungary (Lakatos, 1992; Gazsi, 1972, p. 16). As it turned out, Horthy's attempt to withdraw Hungary from the war was unsuccessful, and in October 1944 the Germans organized a coup which enabled the Arrow Cross Party to take power.

By that time, the Red Army was already fighting deep in Hungarian territory, and indeed preparing for the battle for Budapest. The leaders of the resistance concluded that there was nothing to wait for and that the Hungarian uprising had to begin, even though they were afraid of turning Budapest into "a new Warsaw" and could mobilize only a very limited armed force. In the beginning of November, they set up the Hungarian National Uprising Liberation Committee. This supreme organization of the underground, which included representatives of both the Magyar Front and "combat organizations," targeted a "national uprising" that was to metamorphose into a "freedom fight" (*A Nemzeti Fölkelés...*, 1944) in full co-operation with "the glorious Red Army." The Committee announced plans for radical reform that were to bring into being a "free, independent, and democratic Hungary" (*Ellenállási röpiratok*, n.d.). The wording seems to indicate, however, that internal conflicts between Communist and non-Communist participants remained unresolved, even though these factions had to work together. The Committee's military staff, headed by a retired Lieutenant-General, János Kiss, entered into negotiations with the Military Committee of the Communist Party concerning the plan of warfare.

The head of the Hungarian resistance movement, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, was a leading racist politician, although over the years he had become a proponent of radical reform. In the beginning of the Horthy era, he was a prominent propagandist of the right wing racialsists. In the 1930s, however, he started propagating a Hungarian-led struggle, a sui generis defensive partnership aimed against both "German colonization" and Soviet expansion. In order to safeguard the independence of the smaller nations of Central Europe, with a population of some 100 million, he drew plans for a "vertical axis" that would include Warsaw, Budapest, Belgrade, and Rome. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky detailed this program in his monograph *Our Place and Destiny in Europe*, published in 1941. During the Second World War, while a member of the Smallholder Party, he came to be recognized as one of the most important anti-Nazi leaders in Hungary. When Germany occupied the country, he took up arms and was even injured in the fighting. Following a period of imprisonment of six months, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was released at the same time that Horthy made his ultimately failed attempt to withdraw Hungary from the war, and was chosen head of the Hungarian National Uprising Liberation Committee.

However, the conspiracy was unsuccessful. On 22–23 November 1944, gendarmerie investigators captured the Committee's board, and four of the leaders, Kiss and Bajcsy-Zsilinszky among them, were sentenced to death and executed in the following weeks (Bartha, 2019; Gazsi, 1994). This marked the end of organized political resistance in Hungary, and the opportunity for an uprising was lost.

Conclusion

Hungarian anti-Nazi politics were rooted in different attitudes and took the form of distinct political parties, factions, organizations and intellectual milieus. Furthermore, in practice these approaches were often strongly intertwined. As we can see, successive Hungarian governments had a pragmatic stance towards relations with Germany, attempting to strike a balance between German support for their planned territorial revisions and the necessity of safeguarding the country's independence. Later, when the fortunes of war turned against Berlin, an anti-war attitude emerged, both in society and among political parties (naturally, this took on various forms and was of varying intensity). The much-vaunted theory of anti-Fascism offered an ideological plateau for left wing forces; interestingly, even though it was elaborated (and later instrumentalized) mainly by the Communists, they conveniently abandoned it at the time of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. The heterogeneous Jewry was naturally opposed to Nazism and deeply worried by German expansionism. However, the threat posed by the country's two imperialist neighbors was widely considered more tangible and immediate than the menace of Nazism alone, and this stance was exemplified by the racialists, who felt that the nation was in a state of continuous endangerment. In 1944, the development of political events led all the various factions, both left and right wing, to create a united resistance movement, however its ultimate goal – a national uprising – was not achieved.

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