

STUDIA HISTORICA

ACADEMIAE SCIENTIARUM HUNGARICAE

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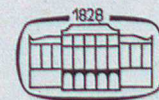
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ARROW-CROSS MEN,
NATIONAL SOCIALISTS

1935–1944



AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ, BUDAPEST 1969

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I. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT

1935 – 1937*

The emergence of the first extreme rightist movements in Hungary, calling themselves overtly national socialists, dates back to the time of the great economic crisis of 1929 – 1933.

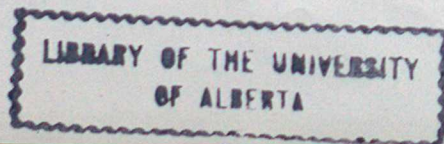
This crisis shook the international and Hungarian supporting pillars of the "Bethlenian consolidation". The Hungarian ruling classes sought a way out of this situation by suppressing even more forcefully the conservative means of ruling and by fortifying the elements of a fascist dictatorship. These attempts once more pushed the extreme right-wing elements into the limelight of the political stage; ten years earlier after the defeat of the Hungarian Council Republic, this extreme right had been the front-line fighter of the counterrevolutionary White Terror. Considered as an indispensable element at that time, it had been incorporated into the regime of the counterrevolution by the Bethlen Government, which made peace with it but pushed back its independent aspirations at the same time. When the superficial calmness of social and political life was upset under the effect of the crisis, when there was an upswing in the revolutionary labour movement, when the inertness of the villages came to an end, and the ground regarded more or less firm till then began to shake under the feet of the urban petty bourgeoisie; when the lower strata of the "middle class" themselves began to feel the effects of the crisis and saw that they hardly could rely on assistance from the top – this extreme right wing of the Hungarian reaction "discovered" once more that "the fatherland must be saved" and that it was only this extreme right that was able to carry out such rescue work. And again, just as in 1919 – 20, the "saving" of the country – i.e. the consolidation of the big capitalist-landowner system – was coupled with their particular aspirations aimed at realizing their economic and political targets.¹

As regards social classes, this extreme right wing of the Hungarian reaction was composed in the 1930's roughly of three strata. One stratum was

*The volume contains a slightly abridged variant of the author's monograph: *Nyilasok, nemzetiszocialisták. 1935–1944* ['Arrow-cross Men, National Socialists. 1935–1944'] Budapest, 1966. The abridgements have been effected in the history of the movement during the period 1935–1937 and after 1941.

¹ See RÁNKI GYÖRGY: *Gondolatok az ellenforradalmi rendszer társadalmi bázisáról az 1920-as években* [Reflections on the Social Base of the Counterrevolutionary Regime in the 1920's] *Történelmi Szemle*, 1963. №. 3–4.

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Printed in Hungary



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for the most part made up of those elements of the land-owning class that were statistically classified as belonging to the category of "medium landowners". This category included most of the "landed gentry" with estates of 100 up to 1000 Hungarian acres; the former big landowners deprived of their land, or of its majority, by the adjustment of frontier under the Peace Treaty of Trianon; and all those groups of the aristocracy that had been reduced to poverty by this adjustment of frontiers or by the chronic crisis of agriculture. The economic world crisis affected all fields of economic life in Hungary most gravely; but the hardest blow was suffered by agriculture proper and, within the ruling classes, especially by the strata of the landowning class mentioned above. These strata of landowners, situated below the aristocracy and the owners of mammoth estates, maintained no close relations with Hungary's finance-capitalists; moreover, they were opposed to "Jewish" banking capital as their creditor, and to capitalists tenants as rivals. From a territorial revision they hoped the recovery of the lands they had been deprived of the increase of existing ones; they expected the consolidation of their economic positions from the state, from efficient government measures, from a stricter state control of the economy; the war, the preparation for war, promised an agricultural boom for them; and, finally, they were urgently interested in intensifying economic relations with fascist countries, especially with Germany that had come under fascist rule and prepared for an aggressive war. These economic and political aspirations — outlined only in brief — were those of the Hungarian landed class as a whole, but emerged particularly aggressively and urgently within the aforementioned strata of the landowning class, which were excluded from relations with financial capital and whose political importance was somewhat pushed into the background by the Bethlenian system.

The other base of the extreme right wing of Hungary's reactionary forces was the "Christian" industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, which was economically very weak in the 20's but increased in strength during the thirties. These new, young elements of the Hungarian bourgeoisie had long been dependent on Hungary's financial capital; they had hardly any roots in the country's monarchical past, and maintained but scanty international business relations. Their aspirations were largely similar to those of the above-mentioned landowners. Owing to their weakness, they were not much worried about the interests of the "agrarian"-landowner class; they hoped to realize their economic growth by means of bigger state subsidies, by governmental protection and increase of the "Christian" capital, by pushing back the "Jewish" haute and middle bourgeoisie, by substantially increasing armament orders to the war industry, and the like.

The third base of the reactionary extreme right wing — the socio-politically most important, and the main representative of the extreme right wing at the same time — was the army officer and civil servant stratum called the "Christian Hungarian middle-class". Irrespective of the fact that the "independent" aspirations of this stratum were suppressed by the "Bethlenian consolidation" in 1919–20, it played an important role in the Bethlen regime of the Hungarian counterrevolution. A considerable proportion of the politicians in the government party — or in the right-wing parties in general — as well as of the members of the Chamber of Deputies came from this stratum. It played a prominent role in the various "secret" military-political organizations of the 20's which often had a decisive influence on political life. But what is more important, it occupied highly important positions within the organizations of state power, in the general staff, in the staff of army officers, the gendarmerie and police, in the entire executive machinery of the state. Both economic and political interests turned this stratum into front-line fighter number one of the extreme reactionary trends. What was involved in these changed circumstances was similar to what happened after the defeat of the 1919 revolution: this stratum of the gentry, army officers and civil servants could expect increased influence only from the victory of an extreme rightist policy; only in this way could it be expected that the "gentlemen" employees of the state be elevated to the position of equal partners of the banking capital and the aristocracy.

This stratum of army officers, civil servants and politicians was increased not only by the recently ruined groups of pre-1919 landowners, but also by the fairly numerous stratum of people "coming from below"; it was now tied with thousands of bonds to the land-owning class, to the recently rising elements of the middle bourgeoisie, as well as to many groups of the intelligentsia, the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie. Early in the 30's this stratum realized suddenly that the crisis threatened to overthrow in Hungary the capitalist-landowner system as a whole, including their own position; and that their value was increasing rapidly in the estimation of the financial-capitalist-aristocratic ruling circles — these circles, holding in their hands the main pillars of economic and political power, felt an increasing need for being supported by this extreme right wing. The crisis brought to the surface the flagrant contradictions of society, the intolerable situation of the agrarian proletariat and industrial labour first of all. The intensification of class struggle urged these circles to rely more than before on the support of the army, the gendarmerie, the executive and terror-machinery of the state. In order to reorganize their shaken mass base they had to rely on the extreme right wing that maintained close relations with the petty bourgeoisie, the

intelligentsia and the middle strata in general. The shift in international relations, the growing activities of the fascist powers, of Germany first of all, placing on the agenda the early realization of territorial revision and, as a result, the necessity of developing the armed forces and preparing for war, had similar effects some time later. Finally, in close correlation with the above targets, the role and importance of the extreme right wing were enhanced also by the substantial requirements of economic policy: to extricate oneself from the crisis, to accomplish some consolidation in the problem of agriculture, to reorganize foreign trade relations, to change over to army development and the war economy after some time — all these acted towards increasing government control in the field of economy, towards intensifying the trends of state monopolism. Yet in Hungary, where the state machinery was possessed by a "historical" class or by one similar to it, where the representatives of financial capital — last but not least because of their "Jewish" extraction — were practically barred from occupying leading posts of state power and administration, the trends towards state monopolies had the inevitable result that the leaders of the political and administrative machinery of the state tried to make their way into the strongholds of financial capital. Hence the tendencies towards state monopolism involved not only the increase of the importance of these extreme rightist strata, but supported their particular economic aspirations at the same time.

These strata of army officers, civil servants, etc. occupied a peculiar "intermediate" position that had its roots in the remote past of Hungarian history; the groups at the top maintained very close relations with the financial-capitalist and landowning circles, while the lower groups — more detached from the chief potentates — were in contact with wider strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. The lower any of these groups were located in the hierarchy of the ruling classes, the more important interests they attached to a complete "change of regime", to a most "radical" fascist transformation of the prevailing forms of rule.

The victory of Nazism in Germany had a profound effect on the circumstances, on the foreign and domestic political attitude of the Hungarian ruling classes. This effect was not simply the inevitable influence that a nearby, then neighbouring, big power had on such a small country as Hungary, as the various representatives of Hungarian reactionary forces tried to convince the international opinion after 1945. Quite the contrary: a profound accord of interests was involved. Short of a complete victory of Hitlerite Nazism, most of the Hungarian ruling classes welcomed its success as the new stronghold of a European counterrevolution, as the support of Hungarian expansionist designs, and as a system whose methods represented a more or

less exemplary pattern for maintaining their own counterrevolutionary regime.

Yet as regards the above-analysed two groups of the ruling classes, there existed substantial dissimilarities and differences between them in their relations to Nazism. The finance-capitalist-aristocratic circles wanted an alliance with Germany that would secure the alignment of Hungary to the front line of a "new", counterrevolutionary Europe and guarantee the realization of Hungarian expansionist aspirations, without, however, involving the loss of Hungary's independence as a power and without the complete severance of Hungary's relations with the western powers. The ruling circles even regarded certain elements of the Nazi rule, of its ideology, as an example to be followed (more powerful state interference with economic and social life in the interest of finance capital, the army and war economy; the further increase of terrorism over the labour movement and the masses of people, coupled with certain limited social politics of the state, or, more exactly, with promises of such a policy; in the field of ideology, an increased realization of the authoritarian principle, strengthening of the militarist public spirit, etc.) without intending to adopt Nazi methods of rule and ideology as a whole.

However, the lower strata of the ruling classes — the circles of army officers, landowners and the bourgeoisie — saw in German Nazism not only the most up-to-date form of counterrevolution and their ally in the field of foreign policy, but also the new, great backer of their "special" aspirations. Aggressive militarism; omnipotence of the state and its machinery; securing economic positions; increase of the economic role of the state; a complete "takeover" manifest in extreme anti-Semitism, consolidation of the "Christian national capital", confiscation of Jewish estates, the creation of a class of "new" medium landowners — in all these aspirations this group of the Hungarian ruling classes regarded Nazism as their natural political and ideological supporter. In addition, this extreme right wing was aware that the ruling class as a whole must be persuaded to accept the way of "saving and making prosperous the fatherland" represented by this wing. They had to prove conclusively that the role of the "saviour of the country" could be assigned to nobody else, and had to produce therefore new, successful actions in defeating and getting under control labour and popular movements; on the other hand, they had to prove to the people at the top that the masses follow them, and that they have to be reckoned with as a social force of great influence also in this respect. This twofold task demanded, and their particular social status made it easier for them, to have resort to novel methods of social demagoguery — introduced by Nazism — more boldly than did

the finance-capitalists and the big landowners. The pseudo-revolutionary image of Nazism was less deterrent to them in this respect. Quite the contrary: from the social demagogy of Nazi ideology they were forging a weapon for their own use, although they mitigated and curbed this demagoguery powerfully, namely adjusted it to their "gentlemanly" appearance at the same time.

It was from this soil that, beginning early in the 30's, peculiar extreme rightist "reformers", "innovators", social apostles, movements founded by these, as well as tiny parties, factions emerged on the political scene. The overwhelming majority rose from the gentry, from the circles of army officers, bureaucrats, landowners and declassé aristocrats within the Hungarian ruling classes. Oddly enough, the social "reformers" appearing at that time represented the strata which for several decades had been identified by Hungary's progressive opinion with antisocial thinking, with "genteel" irresponsibility, ignorance, particularism, the reign of the sword and black-jack, and with duelling bravado.

Their "reformist" programmes comprised a number of shades; the differences appearing between them were determined by the given distance between their advocates and the chief economic and political potentates of the state. The milder or more radical nature of their suggestions and demands, their planned methods, depended on this circumstance. The underlying ideas of these policies were altogether similar: their contents were nothing else but a minor or major "modernization" of the old racist policy of '19' by incorporating the political and ideological elements of Italian and, especially, German fascism. Extreme revisionism and sabre-rattling; cruel anti-Semitism, supported by the fascist racist theory; glorification of the counterrevolution of 1920-21 that "went the wrong way" and had led to a Jewish-big-capitalist, conservative-aristocratic rule rather than bringing about the "renaissance of the nation"; demands for returning to the foundations of '19' appeals to eradicate the "liberalism" of the 20's and the Jewish-socialist-communist spirit which — so the programmes stated — springs from the same stem as such liberalism; demands for reducing the "Jewish" banking, big and trade capital to obedience out of "public interest", for the economic protection of the Hungarian middle class and the civil servants; and various social promises for the improvement of the petty bourgeoisie. Two typical features of these programmes deserve mention. One is the relatively important role of the "agrarian" element in them, the emphasis on the interests of the agrarian population, the demands for some kind of land reform, with the focus on the confiscation of Jewish estates. This powerful "agrarian" mark had its roots partly in the interests of the landed gentry, partly in the fact that in the Hun-

gary of the 30's — amid the growing acuteness of all agrarian problems — it was not possible to set any sort of programme if the land problem was not raised in some form. The other common and typical feature was that practically none of these programmes contained — not even in the form of remote promises — any proposal relating to the working class; the programme-makers regarded the industrial proletariat — explicitly or implicitly — as the "slave" of social democratic and communist Marxism, and made not even an attempt to include this proletariat in the domain of their social demagoguery.

These extreme rightist "oppositionist" trends and movements, directed at introducing totalitarian fascism, gained no substantial prominence up to the middle of the 30's. At that time the strata forming the principal base of the extreme right wing were practically without exception at the side of the government party, and regarded its right wing as their political representation. This right wing grew from the same social background, its deputies were animated basically by the same aspirations and ideas as the groups and parties that called themselves oppositionist and declared themselves "national socialists" more and more often. It was from this stratum that Gyula Gömbös emerged; when he was appointed Prime Minister, the extreme rightist trends were adopted as the government programme for a while, and the extreme right wing entertained hopes of having laid thereby the foundations of its final victory. And, indeed, the fact that Gömbös was made Prime Minister at the worst period of the economic crisis proved the volte-face to the extreme right on the part of the finance-capitalist and big landowner circles. Gömbös envisaged to consolidate the regime stranded in an administrative crisis, and to help the strata forming the main base of the extreme right wing in realizing their aims, by introducing a totalitarian system, by organizing a fascist mass movement resting on the middle class and, partly, on the petty bourgeoisie, by annihilating the legal organizations of the labour movement, by means of a "reformist" policy made public with much propaganda, by social demagogy addressed also to the lower middle-class, and partly by introducing a new orientation in foreign affairs. A large-scale replacement of staff was started in favour of the extreme right, and the policy of Gömbös held out the promise of an even more comprehensive takeover. But Gömbös's plans were partially frustrated. It appeared that the working class and the labour movement had not been broken up to such an extent that they should have acquiesced in their complete disintegration. The economic crisis was getting over the hump. Already in the course of his progress, Gömbös was forced by the finance-capitalists and the big landowners to give up his plan of a complete economic and political "takeover", to

curb his social demagogism addressed to the petty bourgeoisie, to give up his plans to create a new fascist mass movement, and, last but not least, to limit the one-sided subordination of Hungary's foreign policy to German-Italian interests. The conscious strata of the working class offered resistance. The groups of the petty bourgeoisie attached to Gömbös turned away from him. Even the extreme right wing composed of the gentry, gentroid elements, army officers, landowners and the new bourgeoisie became more and more disillusioned: the "softening" of the Gömbös programme in progress, its ensuing failure, once more blocked the way to their rapid forging ahead. As the representatives of this extreme right wing put it later on, Gömbös's first fascist experiment failed because he relaxed his anti-Semitism, and because he failed to carry out his "social" programme.

But the experiment of Gömbös had a partial success nevertheless: it resulted in a considerable growth of the extreme right forces aiming at totalitarian fascism, in the strengthening of their positions and self-confidence. Beginning from that time, the demands of the extreme right wing were invariably included in the platform of any government in power.

It is easy to see from all this why the extreme rightist, fascist movements assumed a more marked oppositionist attitude only after the partial success of the Gömbös programme and after his fall, and why they started more vigorous activities on the political stage only after those events. The more so since it was by that time — in the middle of the 30's — that besides the factors of home policy the international conditions inflating the self-confidence (and actual power as a matter of fact) of the extreme right wing came to maturity: fascist Italy took the road to overt aggression; and Nazism, having "established" itself at home, started the political and ideological preparation of its aggressive designs with great zeal. Yet, even so, the profound effect Nazism had in Hungary was only possible because there existed a highly influential stratum — besides and above the growing pro-German tendencies of the ruling class as a whole — within the ruling classes which was the carrier and advocate of extreme fascist aspirations.

It was at that time, in the mid-thirties, that an indispensable element of the fascist mass movement emerged in Hungary: it was the movement of the "middle-class", of army officers, landowners and new bourgeois strata that opposed the prevailing forms of rule. This oppositionism was manifest in a number of shades on the scene of political life; on the part of those standing near the top-ranking potentates it appeared as the strengthening of the right wing of the government party, and as the increase in the extreme demands of this wing; on the part of those more detached from the circles of finance-capitalists and aristocrats, standing mostly on a lower rung of the social lad-

der at the same time, it was manifest in drawing closer to the fascist, "national socialist" parties. It is highly characteristic in this respect that also the leaders of the later arrow-cross-fascist mass party traced back the oppositionist separation of their movement to the "failure" and fall of Gömbös.

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As mentioned, the "national socialist" movements in Hungary represented no considerable force before 1935 — 36. Leaders, groups and parties emerging in the first half of the thirties, sometimes separating, sometimes fusing, were not able to gain substantial influence. Most of them were "modernized" variants of the old racist gatherings, and were active within the "middle-class" or backward peasant strata of various rural districts. It was only Böszörmény's "scythe-cross" movement — also initiated by gentry-gentroid circles by the way — that was able to attract larger numbers of the most destitute, most backward have-nots of the agrarian proletariat in the Hungarian Plain for a while. As a result of the 1935 elections, only two "national socialist" deputies were seated in Parliament. The pushing forward of the extreme right at that time was manifest in the swing to the right within the government party, and in the increasing number of extreme rightist deputies in Parliament who were elected on the ticket of the government party.

In 1935, after his pensioning, Ferenc Szálasi launched his movement based on a small group made up mainly of army officers; in the beginning it did not differ substantially from the nationalist-racist "secret" organizations that had practically become traditional in a counterrevolutionist Hungary. The movement was called the Party of the National Will — its "provisional" platform, drafted by Szálasi, appealed to public opinion in the name of "God, peasant, citizen and soldier"; what it promised in the first place was the restoration of the fatherland's old grandeur, the denunciation of the burdens arising from the Trianon Treaty, of the floating debts to non-fascist states, the assumption by the state of domestic, mainly farmers' debts, the eradication of Jewish credit economy, the creation of a "purely" Hungarian credit system. These were the conditions under which — the programme said — a successful battle could be fought for "the glory, greatness and happiness" of the "Hungaria" United Lands (a variation of the concept of Greater Hungary "modernized" by the Nazi "völkisch theory"). Szálasi's "long-term" programme had been completed by that time; he intended to realize it after the acceptance by a referendum. This was a confused design of a "peasant state with an industry" (not a manufacturing industry, but a small and agricultural industry) in which public and private interests would be safeguarded on a fifty-fifty basis, where the nation-leading "intelligentsia", the

“national-capitalist” entrepreneur, the “nation-maintaining” worker, and the “nation-defending” soldier would live and work in harmonious co-operation as “equivalent value-factors”. This long-range programme was completed by promises of the complete elimination of Jewry and of the elevation of peasantry that preserves the Hungarian race. This programme was confined to generalities, its “national socialism” was over-abounding in Christian and reactionary-feudal, even patriarchal, elements, abstained from all sharper social demagogism, and envisaged coming into power solely through the will of the head of state (Horthy). The only “advantage” of the programme was its obscurity and confusion which permitted to interpret its promises to a certain extent as having a variety of social contents.

Yet early in autumn of 1936, there was a “turning-point” in Szálasi’s movement. Having been badly defeated in a by-election, Szálasi went to Germany for a “study-tour”. What he saw there — keeping in mind the failures at home — prompted him according to all indications to turn his propaganda towards the working masses; returning home, he declared that he wanted to put the greatest emphasis on liberating the working class from the “shackles” of Marxism, on organizing the “workers”. This was the first instance in Hungary that a “national socialist” movement turned expressly towards the lower classes of the people. The petty-bourgeois, lumpen-proletarian “radical” activists of the various extreme fascist parties and groups (those of the dissolved Böszörmény movement first of all) joined Szálasi; in addition to the wing composed of army officers and gentroid elements, there emerged within his party a practically independent “radical” “proletarian” (actually petty-bourgeois) wing of anarchistic trends which was not only nationalistic and anti-Semitic, but also used a social demagogism that was unusually savage in Hungary at that time. It is a characteristic fact that this wing signed its leaflets — prepared illegally in most cases — as the “Executive Committee of the Social National”. The two wings, which had practically no contact with each other, were held together only by the person of Szálasi. When the party was prohibited in spring 1937, its membership amounted to a few thousands.

After the death of Gyula Gömbös in the autumn of 1936, Kálmán Darányi was appointed Prime Minister. In autumn 1936 and in spring 1937, the Darányi Government took steps to reduce the pro-German policy that had become too “one-sided” and to push back the extreme right wing that had become too prominent at the time of Gömbös. In the course of these measures Szálasi’s party was proscribed in April 1937.

Proscription of the party, the arrest of Szálasi and his militants, their release from prison, bringing Szálasi to trial again in July 1937, only resulted

in a temporary setback in the arrow-cross movement. Moreover, the official procedures, the great publicity in the press, actually contributed to enhancing Szálasi’s and his movement’s respect in the eyes of fascist factions. The “radical”-anarchistic wing of the movement carried on its propaganda work; the arrow-cross groups’ street demonstrations, provocative actions, terroristic assaults against leftist workers and Jews grew in number.

By the second half of 1937, the strength of the national socialist movements showed a considerable increase beyond doubt. This, however, was not the result of any substantial broadening of their mass influence; it was rather correlated with two characteristic momentums: on the one hand, further elements of the extreme right wing of the genteel middle-class approached the arrow-cross movement; and there were endeavours to form a coalition of the various fascist parties and groups, on the other.

Although Darányi’s steps resulted in a certain relaxation of tension in home politics for some months, they were not able to check the “oppositionism” of the extreme right wing, which drew more and more impulses from the international pushing forward of fascism. Naturally, this oppositionism continued to manifest itself in a number of political attitudes that differed but slightly from one another; but the essential fact was that the “gentlemanly” fascist, the parlour arrow-cross, and the more “radical” arrow-cross trends continued to make rapprochements. The right wing of the government party withdrew, and was preparing for a more favourable situation to resume its activities by strengthening its extreme right ties outside the NEP. Soon these ties were extended directly to the arrow-cross movement: András Mecsér, a leader of the right wing of the government party, who had long been the man of confidence of the Germans, turned Szálasi’s supporter, while standing in the background. The bulk of the staff officers, seeing how Germany was disregarding the clauses of the Versailles Treaty one after another, were afraid that Hungary would miss the opportunity, and were increasingly discontent with the government’s “half-hearted” plans for army development; some groups of them turned more or less overt supporters of the arrow-cross movement; others, especially in the top echelons of the army and the general staff, took an overtly oppositionist, gentlemanly-fascist stand between the government and the arrow-cross movement.

On the other hand, the other elements of the extreme right wing merged with the arrow-cross movement organizationally. It was at that time that Kálmán Hubay, the later lieutenant of the arrow-cross party, a journalist-hireling of Gyula Gömbös, came to “realize” his national socialist “convictions”. A managing editor of two government dailies in 1936, his career was wrecked after the death of Gömbös, and he was dismissed from his editorial

posts late in 1937.² The political career of vitéz László Endre is a typical example, and was directly connected with the arrow-cross unity formed in autumn 1937. As the chief constable of the Gödöllő district, he stood for the by-election of Lovasberény as the non-official candidate of the government party, but suffered an ignominious defeat by the official candidate of NEP. But in June 1937 he made his appearance as an oppositionist fascist "party leader": he formed the Race-Protecting Socialist Party and rented as party premises a few rooms in the house at 60 Andrásy Street, which became the illfamed arrow-cross centre some years later.³ His first meeting with Szálasi took place in August 1937; they made a "contract for life" under which a new party was formed from László Endre's party and the proscribed NAP. The new party was called Hungarian National Socialist Party. Endre accepted Szálasi's leadership, as well as Hungarism as the theory of the united party, unconditionally.⁴

Up to the summer of 1937, the contesting, now fusing, now disuniting national socialist parties and groups were not able to shape any policy that would have overcome the personal differences within the arrow-cross camp, and could have led the groups of various shades to take a more or less uniform course. After that time, however, the situation changed to a certain extent under the external and internal conditions that turned favourable for the fascist movement: the arrow-cross factions came to realize that unless there would be some kind of joining forces they would not be able to grasp the opportunity. That it was Szálasi and his movement about which the unity began to crystallize can be explained by numerous reasons. Unlike the former opportunists who claimed leadership, Szálasi had not yet lost his authority; on the contrary, inconsistent official persecutions — and a non-final sentence to ten months prison in November 1937 — surrounded him with the halo of a martyr. As we have seen, he was the only arrow-cross leader who not only tolerated, but purposefully organized the "radical" terroristic elements of the various fascist groups; this most active "militant" praetorian guard had for the most part joined Szálasi by autumn 1937. It was Szálasi who maintained the closest relations with the officers of the army and, especially, of the general staff whose support was indispensable

² Belügyminisztérium Irattára [Home Office Archives]. Népbíróság [People's Tribunal] (hereinafter Bm. Nb.) Kálmán Hubay's Trial before the People's Tribunal.

³ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, JÓZSEF: *A magyar nemzeti szocialista mozgalom története* [History of the Hungarian National Socialist Movement] Manuscript. Országos Levéltár [National Archives], Külügyminisztérium [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (hereinafter OL., Küm.) Békeelőkészítés [Preparation for Peace] III/12/121, pp. 17—18; Bm. Nb. Trial of László Endre and Accomplices before the People's Tribunal. Vol. I.

⁴ Bm. Nb. Trial of László Endre and Accomplices before the People's Tribunal. Vol. I.

for the fascist movement in Hungary. Szálasi's authority was also enhanced by his ideological and political fanaticism. And last but not least, the official circles of Nazi Germany began to show interest in his person.

Our informations about the German relations of the arrow-cross movement at that time are rather scanty. Not that these relations should not have been close; only most of our available sources do not mention them. What we do know is that practically every arrow-cross faction tried to establish ties with the official circles of Germany, partly through the German embassy in Budapest, partly directly: there was hardly any self-made "leader" who should not have been in Germany and should not have offered himself to Hitler or to the men of the Nazi party.⁵ And it is evident, too, that Szálasi and Sándor Csia had talks with official German circles — and presumably established connections with them — already at the time of their visit to Germany in the autumn of 1936. Sándor Csia, Szálasi's deputy, had been responsible for the German relations since 1936.⁶ In autumn 1937, Ferenc Rothen, an activist of the German minority movement in Hungary, joined Szálasi. He was put in charge of the party's foreign relations with the special instruction to secure for Szálasi the support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That Rothen was a German agent is abundantly evidenced by the fact that he left Hungary in spring 1939 to become the chief official in the East European department of the German ministry, and head of one of the most important intelligence centres in Hungary.⁷

Owing to its immaturity, not much attention was paid to Szálasi's movement by Germany in the beginning. Yet 1937 brought a change also in this respect: the German press followed their activities with increasing interest. It was especially Szálasi's new trial and conviction in the court of justice late in 1937 that found a wide response: leading German papers, such as the Essener Nationalzeitung, Kölnische Zeitung, Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, devoted columns to the trial and were glorifying the arrow-cross leader.⁸ The Berliner Tageblatt "foretold" Szálasi's "future", saying among others: "This keen interest with which the public followed the trial, and the enthusiasm with which the masses surround the movement show that a

⁵ During his visit to Germany, Zoltán Böszörmény was granted an audience by Hitler; Count Sándor Festetics had talks with the German Minister in Budapest, etc.

⁶ Bm. Nb. Trial of László Endre and Accomplices before the People's Tribunal. Vol. I. Evidence given by László Baký.

⁷ Bm. Nb. Trial of László Endre and Accomplices before the People's Tribunal. Vol. I.

⁸ Virradat, December 6, 1936.

magnificent role and lofty mission Szálasi will have to fulfil in Hungary's history."⁹

Yet to create the arrow-cross unity — which, according to all indications, was urged also by Nazi Germany — proved to be no easy task.¹⁰ In his poem of that time, József Erdélyi wrote in vain: "Brethren, if our purpose is common, it makes no difference who our leader will be" — the fascist leaders were reluctant to give up their "precedence". Yet their personal quarrels and intrigues had also a political background. The leaders of the arrow-cross factions came largely from the same social stratum of the counterrevolutionary landed gentry, army officers, civil servants, and included elements of the petty bourgeoisie in part only; there existed serious differences between them in one question: their relations to fascist "radicalism". The National Socialist Party of the arrow-cross Count Sándor Festetics, the owner of some 50 000 acres of land, considered Szálasi's camp too radical: a count dreads such a movement even if he is for the arrow-cross. So Festetics broke with István Balogh, Jun., the fascist leader of Debrecen,¹¹ and with his followers who felt attracted by Szálasi. Instead he entered an "organizational and friendly agreement"¹² with the similarly "moderate" group of Fidél Pálffy, another arrow-cross count. Fusion and Szálasi's leadership were rejected also by the genteel-middle-class fascist National Front led by János Salló. Salló declared in his statement: "... it is too bad that there is no unity in the movement, but our efforts to create unity must not be exhausted by looking for a leader ... what is much more important for the time being is the problem of the leading class." He also criticized Szálasi's movement because the leaders had no sufficient knowledge of economic policy, no organizing ability, no sense for politics.¹³

But, despite all this, the efforts at arrow-cross unity were partially successful in the autumn of 1937. On October 23, after lengthy preparatory talks, it was made public in the Concert Hall of Buda that the National Socialist

⁹ Berliner Tageblatt, December 2, 1937.

¹⁰ As we shall see in our subsequent analyses, they never were — and could not have been — able to create such unity.

¹¹ In the 1935 elections only two national socialists were seated in Parliament: Count Sándor Festetics and his ally, István Balogh, Jun.

¹² HUBAY, KÁLMÁN: *Darányi Kálmán és a mozgalom kibontakozása* [Kálmán Darányi and the Progress of the Movement]. Discourse at the course of the Arrow-Cross Party, 1940 (Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár. Manifold).

¹³ Salló explained in his statement that the "National Front returns to the ideological foundations of Hungarian nationalism of 1919–1920, which was the first right-wing movement of Europe, rising like a tempest but subsiding deplorably soon. It is on this particularly Hungarian foundation that the National Front placed the edifice which represents Hungarian socialism". He also made an interesting statement that "... the so-called extreme rightist movements became really active only after the death of Gyula Gömbös ...".

Party of István Balogh, Jun., the Race-Protecting Socialist Party of László Endre and Count Lajos Széchenyi, as well as a few other national socialist factions and party fragments fused with Szálasi's movement.¹⁴

The attendance of the meeting gave Szálasi an enthusiastic ovation; Szálasi expounded the three fundamental pillars of Hungarism in soldierlike sentences: the moral pillar (true belief in God, true love for Christ), the spiritual and material "pillar" (everything belongs to the people's community which is embodied by the state; "within the architecture of the people's community the peasant is the supporter of the nation, the worker is the builder of the nation, the intelligentsia is the leader and guide of the nation, the army is the defending power of the nation"). Here are some typical sentences of his speech: "Our people's community wants a peasant state of high standards that has an industry, and not an industrial state of low standards with a peasantry." "The Hungarian national socialist movement will create for the worker, this embittered socialist, a fatherland, and a nation that respects the worker." "The army does not engage in politics ... but its ideology has been laid down in the service regulations" and the three pillars of this ideology are the fear of God, the love of one's country, and discipline. Szálasi declared in his address that "the Hungarian national socialist movement submits this plan of development with profound reverence to His Serene Highness the Regent" and, by way of conclusion, presented another three cardinal theses: 1. Evolution is conceivable only with the leadership of the Regent; 2. the armed forces must be concentrated under one command, the gendarmerie and the police must be placed under army command; 3. the principal task of the Hungarian "people's community" is to fight Bolshevism.¹⁵

¹⁴ The other factions and party fragments: one main district of Fidél Pálffy's party; the Irredentist Camp; the main district of the Festetics movement. *Virradat*, October 24, 1937.

¹⁵ *Virradat*, October 24, 1937.

II. THE "HEYDAY" OF THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT 1938 — 1939

THE ANSCHLUSS AND THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT

The arrow-cross movement in Hungary showed a marked upswing, became a mass movement on a broad basis, during the period from early 1938 to the middle of 1939. The decisive factor behind this upturn was the further sweep, the large-scale political, ideological and, last but not least, material support by nazi Germany.

The swing to the right of the Darányi Government started late spring and early summer of 1937. The principal underlying reasons were considerations of foreign policy. Beginning from the spring of 1937, it became increasingly evident that the Western Powers pursued the policy of "appeasing" Germany by concessions instead of taking a strong line against the nazi aggressors. From the attitude of Lord Halifax, the new British Foreign Secretary, Hungarian government circles were justified in many a respect to draw the conclusion that the pro-German foreign policy, pursued in the hope of a territorial revision against Czechoslovakia, would not lead to a break with the Western Powers, and that the Chamberlain government would be willing to accept such a policy with leniency and "understanding".

The Berlin talks of the Hungarian government in November 1937 set off a new wave of a general swing to the right. In the course of these talks between Darányi, Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya, and Hitler and Göring, more light than before was thrown on Germany's designs against Czechoslovakia, and the Hungarian government was given a somewhat more definite promise that, within a certain scope, Germany was willing to support Hungarian territorial claims. Yet German leading circles did not conceal the precondition of this support: the Hungarian government was expected to back the German aspirations to a greater extent than before. The Hungarians were also informed unmistakably that the annexation of Austria had been decided definitely, and that the advance of nazi Germany to the Hungarian frontier was inevitable sooner or later. In this situation the double-dealing policy of the Hungarian ruling circles, initiated after the death of Gömbös, was pushed to the background.

German superior strength in East and Southeast Europe had been consolidated remarkably by that time. The importance of Italy as an independent power — upon whose support the Hungarian counterrevolutionary system

had reckoned with certainty from the very beginning — continued to decrease, which was clearly shown by Italy's early acquiescence in the Anschluss. By the end of 1937, the Yugoslav regime was under strong German influence, and the elections in Roumania in December 1937 resulted in an intense swing to the right, raising to power the pro-German Goga Government. And the ruling circles of Poland were also interested in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, which reduced their anti-German tendencies considerably.

But the Hungarian ruling circles accepted this increasing subordination to Germany not without opposition and aversion: they were worrying not only about the restriction of their independence, they were also afraid of the consolidation of the extreme right. However anxious they were to make believe the public and themselves that — as Darányi put it later on — "home politics is one matter, foreign policy is another", they knew very well that a partnership in the aggressive German aspirations concerning Southeast Europe would entail increasing subordination even in home politics, growing German penetration, and headway of the Hungarian extreme right. The fear of German expansion, of the extreme right, mingled in them with the awareness of growing opportunities for a territorial revision. In any case, it was the latter that emerged victorious from this dilemma, imperialistic craving for revision subdued the dread of German expansionist designs. The occupation of Austria evoked mixed feelings, yet was accepted by writing a deferential message to Hitler; there was busy co-operation in isolating Czechoslovakia, in supporting the German designs against that country.

Increasing subordination in the domain of foreign policy entailed grave consequences in home politics. The demands of nazi Germany were growing considerably, and the Hungarian government, in order to avert a possible German intervention, and also to support their own revisionist aspirations, began to adjust the country's foreign and economic policy, even home politics, to German requirements at an increasing rate. All this was manifest in a further swing to the right of the government programme, as well as in the fact that free play was given to the economic and political demands of the strata of army officers, civil servants, medium landowners and the new bourgeoisie.

The first, loudly boosted success of the extreme right was the election of László Endre, prominent member of the extreme right wing, to the position of the Deputy-Lieutenant of County Pest in January 1938. But a much more important and significant fact was that the number of members of Parliament and politicians drifting towards the right wing grew rapidly. Late in February, Dániel Mocsári, a leader of the extreme

right, was elected vice president of NEP.¹ The government was preparing the development plan of the armed forces at a forced pace, and the programme was made public by Darányi on March 5. Even if not satisfied in every respect, the extreme right accepted the Győr Programme with unanimous approval, "as it showed that the right-wing ideology was correct".² The settlement of the Jewish question was "elevated" to the rank of a government programme in his speech at Győr where Darányi declared anew, and officially as a matter of fact, that the "Jewish question does exist in Hungary" and that it must be solved in a "legal and systematic manner".³

The first anti-Jewish Bill was framed in feverish haste, completed within a few weeks and presented to the chamber of deputies without delay.

Immediately after the Anschluss, Darányi reshuffled his Government, and the personal changes showed once more how the extreme right was gaining ground.⁴ Seeing this swing to the right, Béla Marton, who had been plotting to overthrow Darányi a year before, declared that "Darányi is actually our man".⁵ Regrouping of the political forces towards the extreme right affected also the Smallholders' Party: about the middle of March, six Smallholder deputies, led by Mátyás Matolcsy, seceded the party "whose right-wingism was given up by Eckhardt" and were orientating themselves to the arrow-cross opposition.⁶

The arrow-cross movement, Szálasi's Hungarian National Socialist Party first of all, unquestionably the party with the greatest influence by then, made energetic use of the favourable circumstances created by the general swing to the right. Beginning from the turn of 1937—1938, the foul waves of arrow-cross propaganda were running high. Budapest and the country towns were flooded with leaflets cheering Szálasi and promising "definite" victory for 1938; the raging anti-Semitic and chauvinistic campaign was organized by the "radical", terroristic praetorian guard that gathered round Szálasi in united action.⁷ The influence of the fascist drift was gaining strength abruptly in the masses of the staff of officers, the genteel middle-class and the petty bourgeoisie.

¹ Népszava, March 5, 1938.

² Összetartás, March 13, 1938.

³ Népszava, March 5, 1938.

⁴ This was shown also by the appointment of Ödön Mikecz as Minister of Justice, of Lajos Reményi-Schneller as Minister of Commerce. It was at that time that Béla Imrédy, one of the drafters of the Győr Armament Programme, was made member of the cabinet as Minister of Economics without portfolio. Összetartás, March 13, 1938.

⁵ Népszava, March 5, 1938.

⁶ Összetartás, March 20, 1938.

⁷ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit., p. 22.

Up to the Anschluss, the policy Darányi was pursuing in relation to the various groups of the extreme right was substantially the same as during 1937: by shifting government policy to the right, by making further concessions to the extreme right, he tried to secure Germany's benevolence, and to have his way with the oppositionist sentiments of the strata of the genteel middle-class. Népszava hit the nail on the head, writing "the government makes efforts to please the middle class. This is why it yields to the extreme right aspirations, tolerates this unrestrained tone, does not finish with these totalitarian experimenters".⁸ This policy — just as the former — was combined with administrative measures against the "radical" arrow-cross wing of the extreme right, chiefly against Szálasi's movement. Thus it happened that on February 24, 1938, in the confused and precarious situation prior to the Anschluss, Szálasi's Hungarian National Socialist Party was banned and Szálasi as well as seventy-two of his political workers were placed under police surveillance.⁹

Before the banning of the party, on February 20, the political investigation department of the Budapest police headquarters summed up in a detailed report the history of Szálasi's movement in 1937, and called the attention to the increasing dangerousness of this movement. The report emphasized that the Hungarian National Socialist Party, formed as a result of the arrow-cross union in October 1937, advocated substantially the same principles and practices as Szálasi's Party of the National Will which was banned in spring 1937. "We see it at every turn" the report says, "that the organizing activities of the Szálasi people grow in dimension day by day. They themselves boast that their movement is developing now at a rate never experienced before..." The report saw the reasons behind this advance in the fact that the autumn union had brought Szálasi nearer to the other arrow-cross parties and groups; that he is worming his way even to the pick and shovel men and "tries to induce revolutionary tendencies in their miserable situation"; finally, to make the dangerousness of the movement even more emphatic, the report says that Szálasi adopts in a deceiving manner — just as before and ever since — as one of his arguments the connection between arrow-cross people and the "extreme left": "... extreme leftists known to us begin to be interested in his movement, evidently with the intention to infiltrate and gradually push to the left this party which, after all, holds Marxian views, especially in the question of capital formation." On the basis of all these, the report recommended to stop the movement with "prompt, drastic

⁸ Népszava, May 12, 1938.

⁹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit., p. 22.

measures", to ban the party as soon as possible, and to search the premises of the prominent party members.¹⁰

But the banning of the party, placing Szálasi and his followers under police surveillance, failed to cause a recoiling in the arrow-cross movement even to such an extent as did the measures taken in spring 1937. The measures taken against the arrow-cross encountered overt resistance from the right wing of the government party; speaking in Parliament, leading delegations to Darányi and Minister of the Interior József Széll, NEP deputies interceded on behalf of Szálasi, opposing the banning of his party and the police measures against the arrow-cross people.¹¹

Yet under the impact of the Anschluss and the ensuing fascist drift, Darányi himself took another step to the right by a substantial revision of his policy he had pursued towards the arrow-cross movement till then: he was heading towards the "legalization" of the movement, its incorporation in the "normal" political life of the prevailing system. There was a dual target behind this endeavour: first, to be pleasant to Germany and to the entire extreme right in Hungary by marking a reconciliatory gesture towards the arrow-cross movement that had become an important political factor by then; second, to come to terms with the arrow-cross leaders and to promote thereby the curbing of the "radicalism" of the movement, and to incorporate it in the counterrevolutionary pattern "modernized" through further fascistization.¹² As early as in his Győr speech, Darányi said after some remarks against the "extremists": "Those right-wingers who intend to employ constitutional means for realizing aspirations that differ from ours will be regarded as our political opponents and we shall counter them with the weapon of persuasion."¹³

Yet in the negotiations for a compromise between the government and the arrow-cross people the diehard and fanatical Szálasi proved to be a serious obstacle. This was shown not only by violent, demagogic propaganda made by his party prior to its banning, but also by his attitude displayed in the matters of "big politics". Early in 1938, his party — under German inspiration — took a stand, partly implied, partly overt, against the Eucharistic Congress planned for summer which was intended by the ruling Hungarian circles as

¹⁰ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1; Report of the Political Investigation Department, Hungarian Royal Police Budapest Headquarters, February 20, 1938, 43/1938, pol. res.

¹¹ Népszava, March 5, 1938.

¹² "... they try to enrol the tamed arrow-cross people as their own legal reserves and to keep them on alert" wrote the communist periodical Uj Hang published in Moscow. Uj Hang, 1938, Vol. I. No. 7.

¹³ Népszava, March 6, 1938.

a monumental conservative-catholic political and ideological demonstration.¹⁴ Szálasi also criticized in very strong terms the new electoral bill presented in December 1937 and debated early in 1938, emphasizing that what is needed is not a secret ballot, but a system of secret plebiscite. He stigmatized the deputies who voted for the bill, or just abstained, as the "enemies of right-wing nationalism".¹⁵ In addition, Szálasi was under police surveillance at that time — from February 24 to May 29, 1938¹⁶ — and was held "too radical" a fascist leader by the ruling circles; so he was regarded as actually unfit for coming to terms with the government.

It was in these circumstances that Darányi's choice fell on Kálmán Hubay, this ambitious careerist with a good turn for politics who had gone into "opposition" as a nazi in the meantime. Early in 1938, after the banning of the Hungarian National Socialist Party, Hubay entered into political alliance with Szálasi¹⁷ and prepared for standing as a candidate at Lovasberény at the by-election early in April. It was a characteristic fact that in this constituency an official candidate of the government party was set up only formally by the NEP; the real common candidate of the entire right and extreme right wing was Hubay.¹⁸

During the electoral campaign Hubay was supported not only by the complete propaganda machinery of Szálasi, but also by the local administration; several extreme rightist NEP deputies were canvassing for him on the spot.¹⁹ Hubay was accordingly elected member of Parliament with a considerable majority. After the election, Darányi invited Hubay for political talks, and the invitation was accepted readily. Darányi reminded him of the "fair" electoral campaign directed "against" him at Lovasberény; his aim had been, said Darányi, to assess the active force of extreme right movements. If the arrow-cross movement is ready to "get legalized" and commits itself to display activities within the constitutional limits in the future, the government would abstain from administrative measures against the arrow-cross movement and would see that they get adequate parliamentary representation. "Darányi told me" said Hubay when questioned in 1945, "that he would make available ten seats, and that I should set up ten candidates; including Szálasi by all means, and then he would guarantee that . . .

¹⁴ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit., p. 23; Népszava, January 30, 1938.

¹⁵ Szálasi also attacked the restrictive provisions of the bill, especially the exclusion of young people and a considerable part of the agrarian population. Összetartás, January 23 and 30, 1938.

¹⁶ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁷ It was typical that Szálasi and Hubay took their oath of political alliance before each other, at the tomb of Gömbös. HUBAY, KÁLMÁN, op. cit.

¹⁸ Népszava, March 9, 1938.

¹⁹ Népszava, March 9 and 27, 1938.

the electoral campaign would be just as fair as the one at Lovasberény had been." Hubay accepted the offer, and the agreement was concluded.²⁰

So there was no longer any obstacle to forming the successor of Szálasi's banned party: the National Socialist Hungarian Party — Hungarist Movement. In accordance with the agreement, Hubay defined in the application written to the police the new party's aims as follows: "To build up the order of the great historic Hungarian state on the basis of the national socialist ideology, by excluding all unlawful or revolutionary means, and by preserving the Hungarian historic national constitution for further progress."²¹

Encouraged by this political "success", Darányi tried to make approaches also to Szálasi. He sent him a message: if Szálasi is willing to play the role of a "loyal" opposition, police surveillance would be lifted soon.²² Darányi suggested that Szálasi should make a declaration for "confidential use" to the effect that he would not try to take over power either through a coup d'état or through the army; if so, Darányi would receive him and co-operate in changing Horthy's negative and unfavourable opinion about Szálasi. Szálasi accepted the offer; Darányi's attitude held out hopes of his old desire coming true: he could prove his loyalty, could "make peace" with Horthy through the good offices of Darányi, and could convince the Regent of the justness of his views. He prepared the declaration, and the Prime Minister took it to Horthy. But Szálasi's "pledge" — so we are informed — did not satisfy the Regent; and Horthy declared to Darányi that no negotiations are possible with a person speaking in such a dictatorial manner.²³

Otherwise Szálasi's plans were countered not only by the Hungarian ruling circles, but also by Germany; the German government had not the slightest intention of helping Szálasi to assume power. They were fully satisfied with that Darányi whom they had tried to overthrow a year before, early in 1937. Erdmannsdorff, the German Minister in Budapest, wrote in his letter of April 21, 1938, that Hitler had declared in the circle of his intimates that the Hungarian regime at the moment is much more convenient for him than a national socialist government would be. Erdmannsdorff interpreted Hitler's words as an allusion to the inaptitude of the contemporary "radical" rightist

²⁰ Bm.Nb. Trial of Kálmán Hubay before the People's Tribunal, pp. 11–12.

²¹ Összetartás, April 10, 1938. This writing states as the aims of the party in addition: "The unconditional liberation of entire Hungary, and of the people of the mutilated fatherland within it, from the political, mental and economic influence of international Jewry, to organize on a Christian and national basis the unconditional loyalty of the members of the nation to His Serene Highness the Regent, to realize in deeds the idea of Hungarian Brotherhood."

²² OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1. Pro memoria. Information supplied by Ferenc Szálasi, May 14, 1938.

²³ Ol.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1. Conversation with Ferenc Szálasi on May 19, 1938.

movements and their leaders who were engaged in an obstinate contest, and added by way of conclusion: "All our interests call for the further existence of the Darányi Government."²⁴

The Anschluss enhanced the ruling circles' revisionist hopes directed against Czechoslovakia, set off an unparalleled new wave of chauvinistic sabre-rattling, and at the same time deepened the differences in domestic politics considerably. The extreme right, strengthened in self-assurance, made heard its voice ever more boldly; the awareness of the German and arrow-cross menace was growing in many people; and the uncertainty felt by the great capitalists threatened the scheduled launching of the armaments programme of Győr. The Horthyist ruling circles were alarmed to see the spreading of extreme right and arrow-cross influences, of restlessness and uncertainty, and concluded that if no steps were taken to control the situation, the direction of political life might slip from their hands easily. They considered the situation so dangerous that they made speak Horthy himself.

On April 3, the Regent held a radio speech; grossly misleading the public concerned with the nazi menace, he declared among others: "It is difficult to see for any man in his senses why all this restlessness and anxiety has captured so many people, as there is actually no reason whatever for it;" all what has happened is that one of Hungary's good friends, Austria, has united with "another good friend and faithful comrade-in-arms", with Germany. The Regent censured the "panic-mongers" who tried to "undermine the hope, confidence and satisfaction" inspired by the armaments programme of Győr. At the same time he told "words of warning" to the extreme right: he declared that he would not tolerate the staff of army officers to be used for political purposes, would not tolerate "revolutionary" methods, agitation with social problems. "I deemed it necessary to tell you all this" — the radio proclamation went on — "to maintain public order. But I deemed it necessary also for warning of the grave consequences all who try to incite anxiety and disunity of whatever kind."²⁵

In this situation Darányi's plan, his policy of coming to terms with the arrow-cross movement, was soon defeated by the resistance of Horthy, by the resistance of the aristocratic-finance-capitalist circles, and the bourgeois opposition supporting them; to all appearances, this political manoeuvre was to become an important factor in Darányi's fall. The ruling circles fully agreed with a government policy that tried "to take the wind out of the arrow-cross

²⁴ Erdmannsdorff's letter of April 21, 1938. German Foreign Ministry (hereinafter: GFM) 3412/E. 014–174–6. Published in Documents on German Foreign Policy, Ser. D, Vol. 5, No. 195. HMSO. London.

²⁵ Horthy Miklós titkos iratai. Szerk. Szinai Miklós és Szűcs László [Miklós Horthy's Secret Papers] Budapest, 1963, pp. 170–176.

sails" but regarded Darányi's compromising policy as too dangerous. They were afraid — and with good reason — that this "compliance" would bring grist to the mill of the arrow-cross camp that was broadening into a mass movement at a rapid pace. As soon as they were informed of Darányi's step, they turned against him and forced him to resign.²⁶

The arrow-cross general staff, as well as Szálasi himself, were looking forward with great expectations to the practical realization of the pact concluded with Darányi; Szálasi entertained hopes of climbing with government support to the top of a "national unity" that comprises the right and the extreme right wing. The resignation of Darányi, rightly regarded by Szálasi as the helper of the arrow-cross movement, was heard by the latter with dissatisfaction and led to the increase of Szálasi's oppositional demagoguery. Later on, Szálasi remembered Darányi saying: "Darányi was defeated because he was seeking an honest, sound way out."²⁷

The Imrédy Government took up office on May 13, 1938, and this was the revival of the "equilibrium" policy pursued by Darányi one and a half years before, after the death of Gömbös. Yet the course of this policy took an even more miserable form than the former, since the situation in both internal and foreign affairs had changed considerably since then. Doubtless, the composition of the new government reflected a certain driving back of the extreme right: besides the position of the Prime Minister, the most substantial change was that the portfolio of the Minister of Interior was given to Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, a firm exponent of the "constitutional" counterrevolutionary circles.

While there was most intense co-operation with Germany against Czechoslovakia in the field of foreign policy, there was a feverish search for some means and ways to counterbalance German preponderance and the pressure from the extreme right. More friendly tones towards the West are getting the upper hand again, and this becomes especially manifest in May and June when it would appear that the Western Powers — and also the Czechoslovak government upon their incentive — prepared for a firmer resistance to the German demands. New attempts were made to intensify the pro-Italian policy, and to consolidate the Polish-Hungarian line of the "horizontal axis".

In the field of home politics, efforts were made to return to former conceptions. While the first anti-Jewish Act was passed in a hurry, and indulgence was practised towards the extreme right as before, more drastic measures were taken against the extremists, including the "radical" arrow-cross move-

²⁶ Bm.Nb. The Trial of Kálmán Hubay before the People's Tribunal, p. 12.

²⁷ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 3. Szálasi's address to the National Great Council of the Arrow-Cross Party on January 11, 1941.

ment. Although these measures were, for the moment, actually aimed at driving back the extreme right "radicalism", they resulted in further restrictions on the democratic opposition, and, especially, on the labour movement at the same time. To subdue the provocative gutter-press and the avalanche of arrow-cross leaflets, a new Press Act was enacted which empowered the government to introduce censorship.²⁸ Authorization of associations and organizations was limited, Section I of Act III of 1921 was amended; accordingly, any movement, even if not admittedly aiming at a violent overturning of the system of government and the social order, was qualified as subversive if its methods involved the "danger of a violent changing of law and order".²⁹

Departmental Order 3400 prohibited civil servants from being members in a number of organizations advocating extreme principles and methods, including the arrow-cross parties. The distribution licence of *Összetartás*, an arrow-cross weekly, was withdrawn.³⁰ The Public Prosecutor confiscated the book "Guiding Ideas of Hungarianism" intended as the platform of the Hungarian Party, written by Kálmán Hubay with the "intellectual" consent of Szálasi.³¹

Although the police surveillance of Szálasi was lifted at the end of May, he was brought to trial early in June and sentenced to two months prison for agitation against the state committed through the medium of leaflets.³² The hearing of appeal in his former case — relating to NAP — was scheduled for July. At the trial held on July 6, the High Court of Justice reversed the sentence of 10 months passed in autumn 1937, convicted Szálasi of organizing for subversive activities against the state and social order, sentenced him to three years imprisonment and ordered his immediate arrest. The sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on August 16.³³ These measures were amplified by strong police steps against the "radical" elements behind the terrorist and illegal leaflet-activities of the arrow-cross movement.³⁴

Yet to silence the extreme right with this policy was even less possible than a year before, nor was it adequate to deal the arrow-cross movement a

²⁸ *Népszava*, May 3, 1938.

²⁹ *Népszava*, May 15, 1938.

³⁰ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 24.

³¹ *Magyarság*, May 24, 1938.

³² SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. pp. 24–25.

³³ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 27. It was in the High Court of Justice that Szálasi made one of his "classical" remarks: "... you say that my theory is confused and incomprehensible. Why, God, too, has created the world from chaos." (Ib.)

³⁴ Ib. pp. 26–27; *Magyarság*, July 13, 1938. After the arrow-cross meeting and demonstration on June 18, 1938, 35 arrow-cross men were arrested; several groups that prepared the illegal leaflets were arrested in July and sentenced to short-term prison, etc.

decisive blow. The pressure from the extreme right wing of the middle class was increasing, their demands drew more and more encouragement from Nazi Germany's expansion, from the chauvinistic-militarist general sentiment lashed up by the Czechoslovak crisis, from the hope of the large-scale "takeover" held out by the first anti-Jewish law. As regards the arrow-cross movement, the government was unable to take steadfast steps against them: it was afraid of the disapproval of Nazi Germany just as much as of the anger of the extreme right wing. The arrow-cross people were sure of Germany's support and were backed, or at least enjoyed the indulgence, of a considerable part of the genteel extreme right wing. During the last months of Darányi's premiership, they profited from compliance; now it was the policy of "persecution" that was to their advantage: in the given circumstances the increased oppositionist demagoguery of the arrow-cross general staff actually promoted their influence, particularly among the backward strata of the employed population.

"Counterbalancing" in foreign affairs, and the policy of domestic bridling were doomed before long in such circumstances. The effect of the Munich Pact, putting on the agenda the "revision in Northern Hungary", the Hungarian-Czechoslovak intergovernmental negotiations, etc. made the race for the "benevolence" of the German ally even more embittered, and this resulted in a further swing to the right of the ruling circles, of government policy, in gathering strength by the various factors of the extreme right, in a further intensification of their demands and pressure.

In early autumn of 1938, Béla Imrédy made his swing to the extreme right. This volte-face aroused great surprise in public opinion; there were many who failed to comprehend why the Prime Minister, regarded as a pro-Western financier, turned the exponent of the extreme right "overright". Yet there was nothing surprising in Imrédy's shift: as we have seen, his predecessor, Darányi, went largely the same way. Imrédy, for that matter, could not possibly be regarded as a true representative of the finance-capitalists, not even before his turn in the autumn of 1938. As regards his ideas, his political leanings, he belonged to the same stratum of civil servants with extreme right dispositions of which the suite of Gömbös had emerged, and he confessed himself a follower of a "gentlemanly reformist policy" as early as the thirties.³⁵

The socio-political contents of his "Miraculous Revolution", proclaimed in September 1938, can best be characterized on the basis of a confidential memorandum written in November 1938, immediately before he was forced

³⁵ Bm.Nb. The Trial of Béla Imrédy before the People's Tribunal, Vol. I, p. 54.

to resign for the first time.³⁶ It is worth analysing in detail this memorandum as it illustrates the substance of the internal strife of the ruling classes very well, particularly as concerns the rate, extent and forms of fascization, and also throws light on the relationship between these internal differences and the arrow-cross movement. In the introduction Imrédy states that after the "solution" of the problem of the "revision in Northern Hungary" the internal situation has become strained. This is due to two principal causes. One is that the majority of Parliament — "misinterpreting" some of his statements — were worried because of the danger of totalitarian government. The other is this: the activities of the organized masses of the extreme right, arrow-cross movement are increasing. With its present character, the government party is not able to attract the masses. Novel organizational work is required, or else the majority of society will throw themselves into the arms of the extremists. "What we have to keep in mind here first of all is the well-meaning, but politically uneducated and naive lower urban intelligentsia, which nevertheless is of decisive importance in forming public opinion."

The government can choose from among three possibilities: 1. Carry on the parliamentary methods employed so far, taking drastic measures against "extremists". This would be wrong, since the government would be defeated in the coming elections. 2. To pursue the policy as before, i.e. to contain the extremists within "constitutional" limits, and to prosecute only illegal activities. This would be equivalent to a further slow deterioration. 3. The only way out — Imrédy believes — is to shift the emphasis of government to the right "as long as the possibility of a parliamentary majority is given"; government by decree, creation of a new "nationalist, militarist, racist policy with a vigorous social welfare programme", acceleration of legislative procedures, and the realization of a broad reformist programme. The principal items of this programme are: an agrarian reform by making use "at a certain gradation" of entailed and Jewish estates; control and adjustment of the credit policy for serving more efficiently "national goals"; development of the armed forces by "paying increased attention to the interests of the staff of officers"; revision of salaries of the civil servants; and, last but not least, a more "perfect solution" of the Jewish question.

These objectives were completed and surrounded by social welfare reforms which were practically not going beyond giving alms; these contained a variety of measures, ranging from the allotment of building sites, rebuilding of labourer's dwellings, "granting credit to little men", to various recom-

³⁶ Bm.Nb. Béla Imrédy's Trial before the People's Tribunal, Vol. I, pp. 290-308. Imrédy's Memorandum of November 13, 1938. It does not appear from the writing for whom it was prepared.

mendations of family protection. With these changes — the Memorandum concludes — a psychological turn could be achieved, the extremists would lose their footing, and "national unity" would be accomplished.

If the shell of phrases is removed from all this, we are faced in Imrédy's programme with the "independent" programme of the more respectable strata of the extreme right wing as it had developed by 1938—1939. This policy was directed, first of all, against the too slow pace of fascization of the ruling circles. The aim of this policy was to realize a clearly pro-German, totalitarian, gentleman-fascist dictatorship, which would satisfy fully the demands of the upper strata of the medium landowners, civil servants, and the new-bourgeois middle class, would ensure their even more rapid economic and political advance.

Imrédy's programme also reveals the contradictory relationship of these strata with the arrow-cross movement: on the one hand, they despise the arrow-cross people, especially the mob, are afraid of their radicalism; on the other hand they know that they are the principal beneficiaries of the extreme demands of this movement. So they rely on the arrow-cross movement, are blackmailing the ruling circles with it, use it for pushing official policy even more to the right, but at the same time try to subordinate the arrow-cross movement to their leadership.

The "national unity", formed temporarily in November 1938 to incorporate the "highland spoil" and ranging from the bourgeois opposition to the arrow-cross people, was disrupted again and the short lull in domestic politics was again replaced by bitter strife. The issue is actually the extent, pace and form of fascization. The aristocratic-capitalist circles feel that for the sake of the "northern revision" they had gone too far in subserving the German interests³⁷, that they had enjoyed only partial support from Germany (the Hungarian military preparations for occupying the Carpathian Ukraine were called off by the German government in November 1938), and that the extreme right is expanding again in a way that is dangerous to them. Now they would like to stop again the further forging ahead of the German influence and the extreme right.

Bethlen and his suite, the Upper House, the "constitutional" wing of the government party, and the bourgeois-smallholder opposition see Imrédy's volte-face with utter disapproval. With numbers of delegations and memoranda, they call the Regent's attention to the dangers: Imrédy is preparing for suspending parliamentary functions, for a "dictatorial" government; by harping on the land problem and other social problems, he is competing

³⁷ For instance, free organization of the Volksbund was approved by the government in autumn 1938.

with the "revolutionary" trends; it is only the growing arrow-cross movement that can profit from all this. "I do not delude myself for a moment" — wrote Hugo Payr, the 'constitution-protector' deputy of the government party, in a memorandum to Horthy — "as it is clear that the arrow-cross menace is at the door. The incensed mob may explode at any moment . . . It is a known fact that part of the staff of officers cheers Szálasi. The irregular troops³⁸ make no secret of their intention not to lay down arms until they have restored order in Budapest."³⁹ "Imrédy" — wrote the 'Christian national opposition' led by István Bethlen — "plays on the most radical strings in his press, his government declarations, in tone and content alike . . . he raises false hopes with high-sounding promises . . . month after month he tries to govern on new principles and to get hold of the masses and what he actually achieves is that the public loses its way and becomes accessible to all kinds of extremists, and that the country's radicalization, even revolutionization, is advancing at a rapid pace . . ."⁴⁰

By contrast, the consolidated right wing of the government party, which had regarded Imrédy as a pro-Western financier in May 1938, and could hardly consent to his appointment, now supported him to the fullest.⁴¹ The unity of the government party, terming themselves "homogeneous", was disrupted even formally in this strife: it is a characteristic fact, and throws a piercing light upon the balance of power within the party, that on November 22, 1938, sixty-three deputies, most of them "protectors of the constitution" resigned from the party and protested against Imrédy's dictatorial aspirations. The next day, the majority of the deputies outvoted the government in a procedural matter. Imrédy resigned, but Horthy did not accept his resignation and, after a short government crisis, it was again Imrédy who was asked to form a government. According to all indications, Imrédy's appointment was partially the result of German wishes, as meanwhile the Germans recognized clearly that Imrédy was their man. "The dissident members of the government party" said Géza Bornemissza, former Minister of Industry, when giving evidence later, "were sure that Imrédy's reappoint-

³⁸ Arrow-cross, etc. semi-legal armed gangs, organized by the government for terroristic actions in Czechoslovakia.

³⁹ Miklós Horthy's Secret Papers, pp. 192–193.

⁴⁰ *Ib.* p. 206.

⁴¹ The rightist faction "always emphasized that the accused (Imrédy) was a banker-boy, and had certain onerous relations especially with bankers of Jewish origin. They explained that the accused would not represent agrarian interests, but only those of the banks, which did not conform with their views. Finally they disapproved of Imrédy's pro-British orientation. But some months later, it was exactly these government-party people who were the most enthusiastic followers of Imrédy." *Bm.Nb. Béla Imrédy's Trial before the People's Tribunal*, Vol. I, p. 213. Dr. Kornél Kelemen's evidence.

ment was the result of German intervention."⁴² The German Minister in Budapest informed Berlin of Horthy's decision with satisfaction: The withdrawal of the left wing (the dissident members of the government party; author's remark) and the Regent's attitude consolidate Imrédy's position.⁴³

But, owing to considerations of domestic policy, not even the ruling circles regarded the situation mature enough to form a government that would have demonstrated a more or less overt driving back of the extreme right; the pressure from the extreme right relying on Germany was too intense to permit this. Even Count Pál Teleki and Minister of Interior Keresztes-Fischer are said to have interceded with the Regent for appointing Imrédy again saying that if not Imrédy would be made head of government this would mean the "outbreak of an extreme rightist revolution".⁴⁴

As appears from all these documents, the arrow-cross movement was already a factor of consequence in the crisis of home politics at that time. Although its immediate danger was grossly exaggerated by the conservative ruling circles and the bourgeois opposition in their fight against Imrédy, the fact remains that by autumn 1938 it had grown into a mass movement of considerable influence.

THE SOCIAL BASIS OF THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT

Of all arrow-cross parties, it was only the one led by Szálasi and Hubay that grew into a broad mass movement. In 1938, and in the first half of 1939, the various arrow-cross factions continued to gather round the Hungarist Movement. In the first days of August, the still existing groups of Festetics' Hungarian National Socialist Party were officially merged with the National Socialist Hungarian Party — Hungarist Movement.⁴⁵ Beginning from that time, the name of the Szálasi-Hubay party was "Hungarian National Socialist Party — Hungarist Movement". Several other arrow-cross factions from Fidél Pálffy's and Zoltán Meskó's movement also joined the Hungarists.⁴⁶ Except for their leader, the majority of the followers of the National Front joined the Hungarist party early in 1939.

An unprecedented influx to the arrow-cross movement started from the lower strata of the middle class after the Anschluss.⁴⁷ During the months of

⁴² Bm.Nb. Béla Imrédy's Trial before the People's Tribunal, Vol. I, p. 210.

⁴³ GFM 73/51 683. Erdmannsdorff's report, November 28, 1938.

⁴⁴ Bm.Nb. Béla Imrédy's Trial, Vol. I, p. 228. Evidence given by Károly Rassay.

⁴⁵ Magyarország, August 3, 1938; A Párttörténeti Intézet Archivuma [Archives of the Institute for the History of the Party]. Csendőrségi jobboldali összesítő [Summary Report of the Gendarmerie]. (Hereinafter: PI Cs. j. ö.) August, 1938.

⁴⁶ Bm.Nb. Kálmán Hubay's Trial, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁷ The other, opposite effect of the Anschluss, the imperilment of national independence, was realized but sporadically in these strata.

the fascist boom; when the belief was spreading that Germany would not stop at the frontier, but would introduce a nazi rule in Hungary before long; when the chauvinistic-militarist wave incited by the ruling circles threatened to flood the entire country; when it seemed that with German assistance the arena of economic and political life would be turned into the hunting-ground of officers' garrisons, offices, gutter-press editors, careerists reduced to the insignificance of pettefogging attorneys' bureaus — it was at this time that the most reactionary, the most corrupt, or most fanatic, chauvinistic sabre-rattling elements of this genteel middle class joined the arrow-cross movement en masse. It was from these elements that most of the top and medium leaders of the arrow-cross movement emerged.

Officers of the Horthyist army were leading among them both numerically and in importance. This anti-popular and antiprogressive, uneducated, low-minded stratum indulging in chauvinistic wish-dreams was an inexhaustible source for the arrow-cross movement. Many ties were leading especially from the officers of the general staff to the arrow-cross movement; if the interwar history of the general staff, this extreme-reactionary focus, will ever be written, light holding in reserve many a surprise will certainly be thrown on the backstage activities of fascist reaction and their ramifying connections. The pro-nazi officers of the general staff were not only supporters holding important posts; they also were active as military and political intelligence men, even as the organizers of the external relations of the movements.⁴⁸ Szálasi himself was on friendly terms with them, he was often seen in the company of staff-officers in important positions. When in early summer 1938 the government tried to drive back the arrow-cross movement by applying more strict measures, several pro-nazi staff-officers were detailed for troop service as a "punishment". Szálasi personally tried to intervene on their behalf, telling the Chief of Staff that he only maintained relations of comradeship with the officers affected. A still extant letter, written by such a detached officer to Szálasi, is highly characteristic and pictures in an expressive manner the relationship between a not negligible proportion of the staff of officers and the arrow-cross movement. Thanking Szálasi for his intervention, the officer writes: "I am saying good-bye to you, dear Frankie: . . . I do not engage in politics. That is your business. All I wish is a glorious Greater Hungary. I only wish to be the sword, and gain victory . . ."⁴⁹

In 1938 — 1939, a considerable part of the leading echelon of the movement was recruited from the stratum of army officers. Since service regulations did

⁴⁸ Bm.Nb. Trial before the People's Tribunal of László Endre and accomplices, Vol. III. Evidence given by gendarme colonel László Hajnácskó.

⁴⁹ Ol.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll I.

not permit officers to be engaged in activities within political parties, many of them asked their demobilization or applied for retirement. Most of the party's central organizers, commanders and training officers of the armed formations set up semi-legally or illegally, were coming from among these officers. It was these officers who were in command of the irregular Hungarist troops intended for "deployment" against Czechoslovakia with government approval in September 1938. If it was deemed expedient, the movement offered as bail high-ranking officers of distinguished names to prove its "gentlemanly Hungarian" status.⁵⁰

Two characteristic figures of this stratum deserve special mention. Major Emil Kovarcz was the prototype of harsh cruelty, of the mercenary captain with an "iron fist". In 1919 he was member of Ostenburg's white terrorist detachment, one accomplice to the murder of Somogyi and Bacsó. When the news of the murder leaked out, Horthy and his suite, to save their reputation, withdrew their support temporarily, and Kovarcz had to flee. This was the origin of his anti-Horthy feelings. Later on, in the twenties, a curtain was drawn over his past, he was commissioned as a gendarmerie, then army officer, held even the post of a professor at Ludovika Academy for some time. In October 1938 Kovarcz joined the Hungarist Party, where he was immediately put in charge of national organizational work. He played a prominent role in the organizational build-up of the movement, in preparing demonstrations and terroristic acts.⁵¹

László Baký was the prototype of the morally altogether depraved adventurer of sadistic disposition, ready to undertake anything for money and career. His father had been a county chief auditor. Baký graduated from a military academy, served in the counterrevolutionary army of Szeged in 1919, and took part in the so-called uprising in Northern Hungary. A gendarme officer since 1925, Baký was put in charge of the rightist movements in the early thirties. In 1935 he was transferred to the Ministry of Interior,

⁵⁰ Here are some personalities of this stratum who played a leading role at that time: Emil Kovarcz, László Baký, Lajos Gruber, Árpád Barcsay, Béla Ács, Kálmán Rác, György Brinzey, István Veghseő, Ottó Tövisházi Ferjentsik, etc. Since the Teleki Government in February 1939 dissolves the Hungarist Party, the members of the Arrow-Cross Party, formed in its place, included István Dobó, retired lieutenant general, Arthur Bogay, retired colonel of cavalry, Dezső Mokcsay, retired colonel, and many others. SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 42.

⁵¹ Kovarcz was accomplice in the preparation of a bomb attempt against the synagogue at Dohány Street in early 1939, but was acquitted by the court of first instance. In the spring of 1941 he was helped to escape from his prison sentence to Germany where he got closely connected with the Gestapo. Early in 1944 he was instructed to go to Yugoslavia and to take hold of, or kill Tito. But Kovarcz allegedly preferred to "work" in Hungary, and returned home in April 1944. As the man of the Gestapo, he played a leading role in the preparation of the arrow-cross putsch on October 15. He was sent to the gallows by the People's Tribunal in 1946. Bm.Nb. Emil Kovarcz's Trial before the People's Tribunal.

where he was the gendarmerie liaison officer to the public security department. As an informer or police-spy he took part in several anti-government extreme rightist organizations of officers. In 1937 he was transferred from the Ministry of Interior, upon which he applied for his retirement. Early in autumn of 1938 he joined the Hungarist Party, and was put in charge of organization work in Budapest and the surroundings. Probably beginning from 1938, but probably from 1940, he was an agent of the SS, informer of the Hungarian police, and at the same time intelligence man of the arrow-cross movement.⁵²

The other leading political group of the movement emerged from the civil servant-intellectual stratum of the middle class, of its most distorted, inferior elements. Their number was growing considerably in 1938—1939, partly through the influx of leaders of extreme rightist groups that merged with the Hungarist movement, partly through political climbers who had been in the government party, or had been royalists and now tried to exploit the fascist boom.⁵³

One typical — and rather mediocre — representative of this layer of political profiteers was Tibor Koszmovszky, a lawyer, the intellectual organizer ("intellectual bench-holder") of the party in 1938—1939. He was the prototype of the gentroid class, brought up by the counterrevolutionary system, whose members tried to obtain wealth and positions by sailing on the waters of right-wing politics ever since their early youth. Koszmovszky was active leading member in a number of "patriotic" youth organizations. After taking up a legal career, he tried to make his fortune through the government party. In his autobiography written in 1940, he says: "... when the political situation in Europe ... was foreshadowing great events ... many of us young people were looking for a political party ... which was up to the exceptional situation and held intransigent, patriotic and militarist views ...". He vacillated between several parties to chose finally the arrow-cross party in March 1938.⁵⁴

⁵² He resigned from the Hungarist Party in 1939 to become one of the leaders of Pálffy's Arrow-Cross Party. Upon instructions by the Gestapo, he played a leading role in the internal strifes of the arrow-cross movements. After the German occupation, Himmler insisted on giving him an important post; as Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Interior, he was the chief executor — together with László Endre — of the deportation of Jews. He was hanged pursuant to the sentence of the People's Tribunal late in 1945. Bm.Nb. Trial of László Endre and accomplices, Vols. II—III.

⁵³ Persons playing a leading role at that time and belonging to this class were — besides Kálmán Hubay and Sándor Csia — Tibor Koszmovszky, Ferenc Fiala, Olivér Rupprecht, Artur Haám, Pál Vágó, etc. Two deputies of the government party — Kálmán Rác and Artur Haám — joined the Hungarist Party in the second half of 1938.

⁵⁴ OL.Bm. Szálasi Trial, Roll 2. Dr. Tibor Koszmovszky, lawyer, in custody pending trial, in his petition submitted to the Royal Prosecutor's office on January 20, 1940.

Another type of this stratum was Olivér Rupprecht, the financier-adventurer of the gentle underworld, the proprietor of *Magyarság*, a daily paper. Up to May 1938, this daily had stood for the conservative-royalist line. Trying to solve the financial difficulties of his enterprise, Rupprecht concluded an agreement with Szálasi, and placed his paper at the Hungarist Movement's disposal. The pecuniary settlement of the agreement was effected by the party from German sources.⁵⁵ The growing of the arrow-cross movement was greatly promoted by the circumstance that, beginning from May 1938, they had a daily paper of their own. Indeed, Rupprecht's enterprise was no longer struggling with financial difficulties, not even the suppression of his paper — lasting two or three months several times — caused any trouble to him. But this was only one facet of Rupprecht's career: soon he was active as the implanted agent of the German intelligence service, his editorial office became one of the most important German intelligence and spying centres in Hungary, one intermediary bureau of financial assistance coming from Germany.⁵⁶

Besides these people, some *déclassé* members of the aristocracy were among the leading echelon of the arrow-cross movement. The has-been counts played a leading role — at least formally — in the Nazi movement from the outset. Count Lajos Széchenyi was a titular lieutenant of the Hungarist Party. An even more typical figure of this group was Count Fidél Pálffy, who was member of the "moderate" Hungarian National Socialist Party — Szálasi's opposing party — before 1940, but then joined the Hungarists as his "course of life" led him there. In 1919 Pálffy was liaison officer between the counterrevolutionary government at Szeged and the command of the French occupation army. He was demobilized in 1920, and moved to his estate in Czechoslovakia. His financial standing was embarrassed, to put it mildly; soon he returned to Hungary, and purchased for all what he still had an estate of some 900 acres. During the economic crisis he became insolvent and it was at that time that he turned toward the national socialist movements appearing on the scene.⁵⁷

In addition to all these, a few petty bourgeois and "labourers" of distorted character and confused thinking were to be found among the arrow-cross leaders. One characteristic figure of the latter was Ferenc Kassai-Schallmayer, a printer, the only "labourer" member of the top layer at that time.

⁵⁵ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 23–24.

⁵⁶ Bm.Nb. Fidél Pálffy's Trial before the People's Tribunal, p. 76. Copy of the 1940 entries in the Hungarist Diary; Bm.Nb. Trial of László Endre and accomplices, Vol. II. p. 241. Evidence by Gábor Vajna; SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 33.

⁵⁷ Bm.Nb. Fidél Pálffy's Trial before the People's Tribunal, pp. 2–6.

The typical embodiment of petty bourgeois-intellectual radicalism of distorted views was Ödön Málnási. Up to the autumn of 1938, the time of his arrest, then from his release in 1941 to his break with Szálasi, he was one of the chief ideologists of the movement, the "chief bench-holder" of the party. Málnási was a teacher and historian. For some time he was attracted by the socialist left, he is even said to have been member of the Social Democratic Party in the twenties. In his first papers he evolves his radical, popular, class-struggle views; his study of Werbőczy, written in 1936, was published in the left-wing periodical *Szép Szó*. One year later he wrote "The Candid History of the Hungarian Nation". In this book he defines the principal trait of Hungarian history as the struggle of the various races living in this country, and tries to reconcile the fascist racist theory with his "radical" anti-gentry and anticlerical views. Because of the "profaning" and anticlerical places in his book, he was sentenced to imprisonment in autumn 1937. After his release he worked in close connection with the German espionage ring.⁵⁸

A particular place and function was assigned within the party to the group of the so-called activists.⁵⁹ They held no leading posts, most of them were active as "worker" organizers. They constituted the "radical"-anarchist core of the movement, they were the leaders of the semi-legal activities (leaflet distribution, demonstrations, etc.) and of the illegal terrorist acts. They were the performers of the low, anti-Jewish hate campaigns, the more "daring" slogans of social demagoguery were their inventions. It was this group that regarded itself as the "revolutionary conscience" of the movement, as the mobilizer of the masses. Needless to say, the police were mostly concerned with this group. Of all leading party men, they pledged loyalty first of all to Szálasi — at least for a while, as it was in Szálasi's fanatical, politically muddled, abstract madness that they detected those traits of leadership through which they hoped to play an important role within the movement. In respect of the leaders of the middle class, these people were able to establish closer connections with the layer of army officers only, exemplifying in this way that the officer's sword is nothing else but a "civilized" variety of the crude fist. With the "political" leading stratum of the party, they were engaged in a constant strife, sometimes disguised, sometimes overt, regarding them as "Spießbürgers" who were needed only until the hour of taking

⁵⁸ Bm.Nb. Dr. Ödön Málnási's Trial before the People's Tribunal, pp. 5–7; *Uj Hang*, November 1938.

⁵⁹ Some of the "noted" among these were István Párkányi, István Péntek, András Török, Ferenc Baltazár, András Kindornai, Ferenc Ormelka, József Klima, Gyula Varsányi, Károly Egyény, Antal Ostián, Károly Nesz, etc.

over power has struck. But in reality, these men were mere means of doing the bloodiest and dirtiest work. The relationship between the activists and the "politicians" holding most of the party positions was one reflection of the inevitable internal conflicts of fascist mass movements, the reflection of the contradiction that the movement had to show a "mannerly" and a "revolutionary" face at the same time, one to the ruling classes, the other to the misled masses.

According to a later statement of Szálasi, 1938 was the "year of the movement".⁶⁰ This was a peculiar period of transition: the party had become a mass movement within a few months, which required and entailed at the same time the employment of the active methods of mass movements; the international situation was fostering their hopes of coming into power with Germany's help before long; time and again the ruling circles took severe measures against them, and all this created a favourable atmosphere for the activists' work. "This extreme group always played a stimulating role within the party, and the party leadership usually bent to their will lest it loses the contact with the masses", wrote Sombor-Schweinitzer.⁶¹

Regarded from the social angle, this praetorian guard was recruited in the strictest sense of the word from the scum of society, from among criminals, psychopaths, from among the lumpen elements of the various classes. Several of them regarded the terroristic arrow-cross activities altogether compatible with regular informer's services rendered to the police.⁶² Pimps figuring in the police registers, sadistic non-commissioned officers, jobless, depraved clerks of private firms were to be found in this group.⁶³ Although there were many persons among them who came down in the world of the proletariat, this layer was by no means to be tied to any of the circumscribed social classes. One characteristic figure of this group was, for example, Ferenc Omelka, a taxicab contractor. One of Szálasi's faithful Hungarists since the summer of 1937, he was a sadistic, unscrupulous psychopath, the organizer of the party's many illegal actions; he served shorter or longer terms in prison or internment camps three times; he was opposing Hubay's party leadership, beginning from 1940 even Szálasi, who — so he said — was a revolutionist in 1937, but abandoned the revolutionary path later on.⁶⁴ One letter he wrote from the internment camp at Kanizsa, explaining in it the manner of punishment for arrow-cross people who let down the movement, is highly

⁶⁰ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 2. Szálasi's speech at the Great Council of the Arrow-Cross Party on January 11, 1941.

⁶¹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 37.

⁶² Bm.Nb. Gyula Varsányi's criminal case.

⁶³ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 53; Magyarország, July 13, 1938.

⁶⁴ Bm.Nb. Ferenc Omelka's Trial before the People's Tribunal.

illustrative of his personality. "If we cannot bring such traitors to trial" — he wrote — "then such persons must disappear. Or are knocked down by a car. This is no mystification, no hairsplitting, but the Boss, or Hubay himself for that matter, are not supposed to tackle trifling; dirty affairs. It is up to us to handle these." The weeds of dissension must be exterminated at once, he went on. "The dead do not make counterrevolutions. The Röhms are cast out by the sound revolutionary spirit immediately. May be the raftsmen (Horthy's nickname) will be idiotic enough to set me at large in one of his boozy moments, this old ass. Let us just stick to our primitive fist-law, and we'll be always right."⁶⁵

To define the social image of the broader masses — attached members and "fellow-travellers" — that were dragged into the movement is much more difficult than to picture the leading layer. No data are available for analysing the social basis of the party; we only may try to reconstruct the picture from police and gendarmerie reports, from the information of local organizations of the Social Democratic Party, and from the fragmentary documents of the arrow-cross movement.

What must be emphasized first of all is that the arrow-cross party gained ground not by some steady, gradual developmental course: its mass influence grew abruptly, and reached its apex in as short a time as one, or one and a half years. It was the offspring of that broad, reactionary mass sentiment, whose formation in Hungary was a result of a long, historical development, and especially of the negative outgrowths and distortions of the counterrevolutionary era; yet, in its given form and intensity, it was manifest as the response to the prevailing international and domestic situation. Concerning the registered party members, their number in July 1938 was not much above the ten-thousand footing;⁶⁶ but membership was well above 200 000 one and half year later.⁶⁷ As is evidenced by the records of the 1939 election, the mass influence of the movement amounted to a multiple of the numerical strength at the time of the 1939 peak.

⁶⁵ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 58. — Omelka was one of the subaltern leaders of the armed arrow-cross gangs that took part in the putsch of October 15, 1944. Omelka was sent to the gallows by the People's Tribunal after the Liberation. Bm.Nb. Ferenc Omelka's Trial.

⁶⁶ Based on various sources, the police estimated their numerical strength to be 8-9000 at that time. SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 23. According to an article written in 1942 by Kálmán Hubay, the number of attached members was less than 10 000 in the summer of 1938, at the time of Szálasi's arrest. Magyarország, March 1, 1942. But available fragmentary data indicate that the numerical strength was much higher at that time.

⁶⁷ At the culminating point of the success of the arrow-cross movement, Szálasi estimated the number of members to be 250 000. In his evidence given at the People's Tribunal, Emil Kovarcz gave an estimate of 300 000. OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1 and Bm.Nb. The Trial of Emil Kovarcz, p. 86.

Needless to say, the details of reports and informations cannot be regarded as accurate data of full value, especially as concerns their number. But they are suitable nevertheless for illustrating the socio-political atmosphere in which the abrupt spreading of the arrow-cross movement took place, and for giving a picture of the most characteristic features of the mass support to the Hungarist party.

It appears from these data that the movement was gaining ground by leaps and bounds during the months following the Anschluss. The success of the movement, practically assuming the dimensions of a mass hysteria in several places, cannot be explained at all by the economic or political changes that took place in Hungary at that time; the great upswing was decisively determined by the expansion of Hitler's Germany, by the boom of the fascist trend. It became obvious in a few months that the advance of nazism stopped at the country's western frontier and the arrow-cross hysteria subsided as a result; but its mass influence continued to rise, at least for the time being.

Further it appears that this mass movement was made up of elements that were extremely mixed in respect of social background. This is why it is so difficult to make generalizations as regards the social basis. To the overwhelming majority who joined, it, the arrow-cross movement could offer not more than a distorted form of political attitude pushed towards the extreme reactionary line. In this attitude it was by no means the more or less recognized class interests, or a small measure of real and sensible social considerations that were dominating; it was rather the reactionary innervation, the prospect of easy pillage, drifting or being misguided, the longing in wrong ways for breaking loose from hopeless subordination, the expectation of the miracle of a rapid rise that were decisive. So it is easy to see why the basis of such a movement was altogether heterogeneous, altogether labile and accidental, subject to a multitude of momentary effects and countereffects, to the local balance of power, and haphazard events. Still, there are four principal layers which can be palpated more or less in this muddled, extreme-reactionary convulsion.

One was the numerically important layer of gentroid army officers, civil servants and intellectuals to be found in the lower strata of the genteel class. The majority of the local leaders of the movement came from these elements, and these maintained the relations with the higher classes. A considerable number of state, municipal and village clerks joined the movement originally; but after Decree 3400 was issued, these had to resign from the party formally. The movement, however, continued to enjoy their support, and many of them remained secret members. The party could not have succeeded without their help or indulgence. "The actual moving spirit of Szálasi's move-

ment" wrote Pál Vágó who escaped abroad in 1960⁶⁸ "was the intellectuals coming under the provisions of Decree 3400 (i.e. the civil servants; author's remark) who sympathized with us for the most part and who were organized under the cover-name of 'clans'. Their persons and their work were not known to the public, since pursuant to Szálasi's wise orders these were registered not by the party, but were kept in evidence by the bench-holder of national building in a secret list."⁶⁹

The other layer forming the social basis of the movement came from the lumpen elements of the various strata of society. Such a layer is the inevitable product of any capitalist system; their role in society and in political struggles is an important sociological problem that has hardly been analysed so far. One fact remains: the Hungary of the period between the two World Wars was marked by striking economic and social contradictions; the rapid declassing of the broad masses of the proletariat and the medium strata, mass unemployment, etc. were accompanied by the complete absence of a free, sound, democratic atmosphere, by the violent stifling of the manifestations of natural class solidarity; on the psychic level of consciousness, all this was aggravated by the anxiety of being split up and defenceless, by the revival of a legion of retrograde views; so this system produced lumpen layers to a pathological extent, and even infected with its spirit the middle class not closely belonging here, as well as the petty bourgeois and proletarian groups. This layer played a most active role in the fascist mass movement in Hungary: most of the arrow-cross activists emerged from here. In addition to the sources cited, all this is confirmed most clearly by appalling police statistics illustrating the role in the fascist movement of the extreme aberrations of this lumpen layer, of the various criminal elements of society. An investigation of the past records of 4292 office-holders or activists proved that 1228 of them were previously convicted; the number of sentences in these cases was 1779, mostly for common-law crimes. The distribution of the crimes committed was this:

theft	284	16,0%
fraud	137	7,7%
embezzlement	128	7,2%
receiving stolen goods	52	2,9%
indecent assault	17	1,0%

⁶⁸ Up to then Pál Vágó was in charge of "building the country" and his principal task was the preparation for taking over power and the organization of the administration in the Hungarist State.

⁶⁹ VÁGÓ PÁL: *Nyílt levél C. A. Macartney úrhoz* [Open Letter to Mr. C. A. Macartney]. Beccar, 1960.

slander and defamation	120	6,7%
insulting the head of state	26	1,5%
assault on private persons and on officers of the law	167	9,4%
military crimes	81	4,6%
assault and battery	163	9,2%
conspiracy for the violent overthrow of state and social order	304	17,0%
other	300	16,7%

"Other" crimes include manslaughter; sentences imposed for penal idleness and begging were frequent.

If we deduct from these statistics the sentences of more or less political character, about 1300 criminal cases are left; so the estimate is that about one-fourth of the investigated activists can be classified as criminals, or at least as elements of a criminal disposition.⁷⁰

The third basis of the movement was drawn from the petty bourgeois elements of towns and — to a smaller extent — of villages. This layer was made up of a great number of innkeepers located in the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie; of urban and village shopkeepers and artisans supporting the party in large numbers; many of the elements vacillating at the border of the independent and the proletarian status; and groups or intellectuals and clerks (underpaid private employees, intellectuals holding inferior positions, small pensioners, etc.) who were dragged into the arrow-cross party in considerable numbers may also be counted in. A large proportion of tradesmen and peasants of German stock who supported the movement were to be found in this category; most of them resigned from the arrow-cross party later on to join the Volksbund. A fairly large number of local leaders came from the reactionary petty-bourgeois elements.

And, finally, the fourth basis was made up of the numerically considerable backward stratum of urban and village semi-proletarians and proletarians who were void of any class-consciousness. Two layers deserve attention within this stratum. One was that of the railwaymen, postmen, "assistant personnel" working in public utility companies, which could be regarded in Hungary as a particular type of the semi-proletarian, as people with a proletarian class background whose circumstances of life were mixed with a num-

⁷⁰ These data are reported by SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 76–77. Although these statistics were recorded not in the period we are discussing, but in April 1941, they are a documentation also of the situation in 1938–1939; the majority of these lumpen and criminal elements were actively involved in the arrow-cross movement at that time.

ber of typically petty bourgeois features (fixed salary, pension, complete dependence upon the high-class members of the state machinery, etc.) The other layer consisted of the most backward elements of the proletariat; of incessantly fluctuating daily workers at the lowest grade of class-consciousness and education, living at the verge of abject poverty and starvation; of the considerable number of proletarians with a rural background for whom the way back to their village was practically blocked, of the incessantly changing groups of labourers coming from the villages, etc. But facing historical facts it must be admitted that, especially in 1938–1939, arrow-cross influence was not restricted to these layers; it involved also other, more stable groups of workers, the new generation of skilled workers brought up in the atmosphere of the counterrevolution, part of the workers of smaller industries mainly in rural districts; and especially the inflated number of miners who were of radical leanings but practically unorganized despite their difficult position; and, to a still larger extent, the politically backward, forsaken layer of the agrarian proletariat (farm-hands and the like).

Thus in 1938–1939 the basis of the arrow-cross movement was broadening in two directions: in the lower strata of the genteel middle class, and in that of the most backward petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Another shift of the basis took place parallel: while in 1937 and 1938 the arrow-cross movement was practically restricted to the rural districts, to villages, the emphasis was shifted to Budapest, to the suburbs and to the country towns later on. And there was a highly significant consequence: the broadening of the party, the joining or support of large masses of the petty bourgeoisie, or masses below it, had the inevitable result that the movement gained much social expansive force, even if this was in a badly distorted and retrograde form.

THE "YEAR OF THE MOVEMENT"

Up to autumn 1938, many of the arrow-cross leaders were convinced that they could enforce a take-over sooner or later. This belief was fostered by the hope that Germany would soon "intervene" efficiently on their behalf. It was this belief that gave nourishment to the rapid growth of their mass influence, surprising even them; this mass influence, of whose real nature, profound social stimulus, they knew rather little, made them increasingly giddy with success. They were feeling in addition that they had the support or sympathy of the lower and medium strata of the extreme right leading class, of a considerable part of the state machinery. So they believed that all they had to do was to deserve Germany's confidence, to show a "gentlemanlike" face

upwards, and a "revolutionary" downwards, and victory would be theirs. Yet they were getting entangled in increasing contradictions as a result.

1938 was the "Year of the Movement" — so Szálasi said, but as far as the arrow-cross leaders are concerned, we might as well term 1938 as the year of the awakening and dying of false hopes, of uncertainty, confusion and internal contradictions. Immediately after the Anschluss, when they still believed in the possibility of a compromise with the government, they displayed a reserved, moderate conduct, tried to check extremist actions. Not only Kálmán Hubay was voicing his loyalty; even Szálasi detached himself from the "radical" oppositionist trend. Partly for tactical reasons, partly to have his police surveillance lifted, but also to show his loyalty, he often emphasized at that time that nobody else could bring under control the "revolutionary excesses." "Our movement", he wrote in a letter of April 14, 1938, "is so strong — Sztranyavszky personally told me — that the government is no longer able to take any step without us. And this is really so. If my police surveillance is maintained, I am worried that this great movement will slip out of my hands, and will be pushed actually to the revolutionary line against my will and against my intentions. If at all, I only would be able to check it at the cost of a most serious interference, but you may rest assured that I will not shrink back even from this. Yet there is no need of this taking place . . ." ⁷¹

According to confidential gendarmerie reports "expulsion from the party leadership of trouble-making elements was going on at that time. Szálasi gave full powers to Hubay and Csia to carry out this purging work most energetically". ⁷² But after the fall of Darányi, when it seemed that the "peaceful" road to power was blocked for the time being, when stricter measures were taken against the movement, and especially after Szálasi's arrest, the emphasis of the movement was shifted to mass actions. In order to exploit the growing reactionary oppositionist public sentiment, to increase their mass influence, they gave freer play to fascist "radicalism". It was in this way that 1938 became the year of demagoguery, irresponsible promising, putting people in the oppositionist mood, provocations, demonstrations, mobilizations, and of the activists; it was this period which the "radical" wing of the arrow-cross people later recalled as the "revolutionary" times of the party. Indeed, their anti-Jewish, chauvinistic and social dema-

⁷¹ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1. Szálasi's letter written to László Szabó, military attaché at the Hungarian Legation in Rome. Among others Szálasi asked László Szabó to effect intervention by the Italian government on his behalf lest he should be interned; and to make inquiries whether in case of such a prospect he could settle in Italy for a while.

⁷² PI Cs. j. ö. May 20, 1938.

goguery knew no bounds at that time. What is more surprising was that their primitive, low slogans and promises, casting away even the indispensable measure of rationality, were given credence by considerable masses. The peasants and tradesmen were given the hope of freeing them from taxation; ⁷³ policemen were promised a salary of 600 pengős per month, as the police belonged to the category of "dangerous jobs"; ⁷⁴ the have-nots were promised land redistribution involving more than ten million acres — nearly three-quarters of the country's cultivated area! ⁷⁵

Összetartás, a gentlemanly, presentable gutter-paper of the movement was turned into a cheap gutter-paper of the "mass" in summer 1938. It carried serial articles of the miserable conditions of workers employed by the Jewish big capitalists. To exclude any mistake, huge anti-Soviet cartoons were published in addition to such articles. ⁷⁶ In a host of illegal leaflets, signed the "Service of the Hungarian National Ideal" or "The Second Socialnational VB" the machinations of various anti-arrow-cross politicians, Jewish bankers and capitalists were "unmasked" with the utmost ranting demagoguery. ⁷⁷

Arrow-cross demonstrations and provocations were intensified during the summer and closely interlinked with their anti-Jewish and social demagoguery. On June 9 and 10, Hungarist groups started bloody fights against Jewish workers and other people in Hunyadi, Oktogon and Klauzál Squares. ⁷⁸ On June 18, the Tattersal mass-meeting of the National Front, a "mannerly" variety of the movement, turned into a big Hungarist demonstration and street row. ⁷⁹ On August 16, the day of Szálasi's trial before the Supreme Court, an arrow-cross mob was rioting in front of the parliament building, on August 20 on the Danube Promenade and at the National Theatre. ⁸⁰ Again in August, the arrow-cross employees of the municipal bus company tried to spark off a general transport strike as a protest against Decree 3400 that prohibited state employees from joining the arrow-cross party, but the plan failed badly: a bare thirty buses stopped going for a few minutes. ⁸¹ There were actions against several Budapest synagogues in November; as the champions of "Christian national" morals, they demonstrated at the Moulin

⁷³ PI Cs. j. ö. May 30, 1938.

⁷⁴ *Ib.*

⁷⁵ Hungarista Híradó, December 1938. National Széchenyi Library. Manifold.

⁷⁶ Összetartás, June 19, June 26, 1938, etc.

⁷⁷ So leaflets such as "What are the Jews up to?", "Twenty years perfidy cries for vengeance to the God of Magyars", "We are the laughing stock of the whole world", etc. OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 2; OL.Bm. res. 6. 1938, 14370.

⁷⁸ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 25.

⁷⁹ *Ib.* pp 26–27.

⁸⁰ *Ib.* p 29.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Rouge night club demanding its shutting down; the shop windows of Jewish merchants were shattered, etc.⁸²

By September and November 1939, the arrow-cross actions were concentrated on the revisionist movement against Czechoslovakia. In a confidential circle Szálasi said in the spring of 1938 that it was not in the interest of the Hungarian nazi movement that the territory of Hungary should be expanded by the prevailing "liberal" regime.⁸³ Yet already in autumn, they threw themselves with all their might into the revisionist campaign stirred up by the government, and exploited to their advantage the mad chauvinistic militarist plans of the ruling classes which took an altogether unanimous stand in this question. The arrow-cross people were the most radical supporters of the revisionist claims, of immediate military actions against Czechoslovakia. And, most characteristically, the government itself was ready to co-operate in this question with the otherwise dreaded and despised arrow-cross movement. In September 1938, special Hungarian irregular troops were organized with government approval, and were actually used for illegal military actions against Czechoslovakia at several places. The composition of these arrow-cross units was even more mixed than that of other irregular troops; under the pretext of "patriotic" actions, they prepared for ravages and for plundering the Jews. When it was tried to introduce a sort of discipline to the Romhány and Vásárosnamény camps of the arrow-cross irregulars, part of them deserted, and 430 people had to be passed back to Budapest.⁸⁴

In the hinterland, the arrow-cross people were the most active participants in the revisionist mass-meetings held by the government, the most extremist organizers of the chauvinistic war propaganda. And all these activities were combined with inducing oppositionist sentiments. As is known, the Munich Pact of the western and fascist powers did not consent to the immediate gratification of Hungarian territorial claims against Czechoslovakia; settlement of the question was referred to direct Hungarian-Czechoslovak government talks and, in case of their failure, to an "arbitration court" of the western and fascist powers. The arrow-cross general staff exploited this decision for criticizing the regime, saying that Germany was not willing to give more active support to the Hungarian claims because it regarded the Hungarian government not "reliable" enough, not rightist enough, to do so.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ OL.Bm. Szálasi Trial, Roll I. Szálasi's letter to László Szabó, April 14, 1938.

⁸⁴ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 32. Yet all this could not prevent many of them from getting again to the frontier with the Turul Federation's "insurrectionists" squads some time later.

⁸⁵ Magyarország, October 1, 2, 1938, etc.

The failure of the Hungarian-Czechoslovak government talks further enhanced the success of the arrow-cross oppositionist propaganda. When the intergovernmental negotiations were broken off, the arrow-cross press insisted on the resignation of the government; a regime, they wrote, which was unable to accomplish revision, failed, and its politicians are bankrupt.

Beginning from summer 1938, they were organizing various illegal or semi-legal armed groups and terrorist formations. "Rifle-corps" were formed under the auspices of MOVE.⁸⁶ The first regiment of an armed organization, called the Black Front, was formed from the irregular troops sent back to Budapest in October; this formation was intended to be principal safeguard of the "ideological defence" of the movement.⁸⁷ The RV (Rend és Védelem: Order and Defence) guard of the movement was formed in November.⁸⁸ The armed terrorist formation was made up for the most part of former army officers, and of hard-core activists of the movement.⁸⁹

Yet oppositionist demagoguery, illegal conspiracies, mass actions and the like represented but one facet of the arrow-cross movement, the one shown "downwards", to the masses. The other, official — and true — image was turned upwards, to the ruling circles; this was the face of loyalty towards them, of the most ferocious anti-Soviet and anti-communist attitude, of the most fanatical support to the revisionist aims. In July 1938, the arrow-cross press proclaimed that the leaders of the Hungarian movement would take measures against those who "discredit and disrupt the movement" and that party members who participate in the preparation or distribution of illegal leaflets, or in other non-lawful actions would be expelled from the party and reported to the police.⁹⁰ In August 1938, the party programme was presented as refraining from all sharper social demagoguery, not saying a word about the land reform problem, and by emphasizing that the Hungarian "change-over" was to be carried out by "Hungarian methods, legal means"; that they were standing on the basis of "devout active Christianity" and deplored that there were differences between fascism and the church in other countries. The economic demands of the programme were extreme and irreconcilable only in respect of the Jewish problem; the aim was to create "a national-capitalist system of private ownership that ensures the balance of the intelligentsia

⁸⁶ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 27. MOVE — Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet [Hungarian National Defence Association] — was an extreme rightist organization of the Hungarian counterrevolution.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 32.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Magyarország, July 13, 1938.

embodying the guiding idea, of capital and work" and subordinates the rate of "change-over" to the "interests of production".⁹¹

The internal problems of the leading stratum of the arrow-cross movement were deepened by the fact that the party leaders did not see clearly Nazi Germany's intentions concerning them. Germany was supporting the arrow-cross party with all political, diplomatic and financial means to turn it into a wide mass movement. In addition of the German espionage ring that had become extremely extensive by that time,⁹² organizations of the Hungarian movement were formed in Germany and Vienna to carry out the instructions of the SS and the Gestapo in respect to the arrow-cross movement in Hungary.⁹³ A considerable proportion of illegal actions was prepared in these arrow-cross organizations abroad; large numbers of leaflets were printed in Germany; extensive organizational work was carried out among the agricultural workers engaged in large numbers in Germany (10 000 in 1938, 15 000 in 1939).⁹⁴ It was to these arrow-cross organizations in Germany that the activists, escaping from internment or imprisonment in Hungary, were admitted, and turned agents of the Gestapo for the most part.

The support enjoyed by Nazi Germany was decisive in the broadening of the arrow-cross movement. Yet beyond this manifold support, which was all the same just partial as concerned their coming into power, the arrow-cross leaders did not experience any firm intention of German official quarters to actually raise to power the movement in Hungary. They were still confident that Germany did have such plans, but they began to realize after some time that for Nazi Germany they meant — at least for the time being — nothing else but a means for exerting pressure on Hungarian ruling circles and on the Hungarian government. Moreover, beginning from autumn 1938, they ceased to be the only means to this end: the Imrédy Government satisfied Germany's old demand and approved of the formation and wide organizational work of the Volksbund, the new, Hitlerite organization of the German minorities in Hungary.⁹⁵ The arrow-cross leaders saw the formation of the Volksbund with rather mixed feelings: they felt — and with reason — that their exclusive claim for German support within Hungary ceased thereby. Quite

⁹¹ Ibid. August 2, 1938.

⁹² According to the testimony given in 1945 by László Bakó, who was well versed in espionage and intelligence work, it was mainly at the time of the Imrédy Government that the German secret service grew into an organization that encompassed all fields of Hungarian political and economic life. Bm.Nb. Trial of László Endre and accomplices, Vol. II.

⁹³ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 27.

⁹⁴ GHYCYZ BÉLA: *Magyar mezőgazdasági idénymunkások a német birodalomban* [Hungarian agricultural seasonal workers in the German Reich] Budapest, 1942, p. 55.

⁹⁵ The authorization of the Volksbund was one price paid for the first Vienna Award.

naturally, an even more murderous race for Germany's support and approval began on the part of the arrow-cross leaders in this situation.

Thus it happened that the arrow-cross movement got entangled in serious contradictions by autumn 1938. Radical actions and slogans were necessary for maintaining the confidence of the misled masses attached to the party, for keeping the party in the state of mobilization. Yet the larger the masses that joined them, the more they were in need of voicing their loyalty to the ruling circles (or to a respectable stratum of these circles) lest they cut off once for all the road to their compromise with these circles and with Horthy. Towards Germany, they had to show a considerable mass force, so they had to employ in this respect the "radical" methods of mass movements. But, at the same time, they had to prove to Germany that they were "capable of government" so it was again loyalty they had to voice towards the Horthyist ruling circles, or at least part of them. They must approve and support every German demand and step to win the confidence of German leading circles; at the same time, they must affirm repeatedly towards the Hungarian ruling classes that they were fighting for Hungarian aims.

The double-faced nature of "radicalism" and readiness to a compromise with the ruling circles is characteristic of any fascist mass movement. As appears from examples in history, every fascist mass movement was labouring between the Scylla and Charybdis of these contradictions. No fascist mass movement was able to resolve this inherent contradiction before coming into power; this was only possible after a compromise with the ruling circles (one of their groups) and accession to power by annihilating the "radical" wing of the movement.⁹⁶

Yet fascist movements are far from necessarily breaking down as a result of such inherent contradictions; on the contrary, victory often depends on whether they are able to maintain this contradiction, i.e. to prevent the misguided masses from abandoning them untimely, or to avoid getting involved definitely in an irresolvable difference with the ruling circles.

As concerns the Hungarian ruling circles, the analysis of the aspects and social basis of the arrow-cross mass movement helps us in understanding why most of these circles looked at this movement with increasing repugnance and hatred. On the one hand, clearly because they knew well that the arrow-cross movement was not simply a problem of home politics, but also a crude means for realizing Nazi Germany's expansionist designs. Although the ties between the ruling classes and Germany were getting closer and closer, and

⁹⁶ This was solved in various ways in the different countries. In Italy, the driving back of fascist "radicalism" took several years; as is known, the "radical" wing was annihilated by a single blow in Germany.

more and more concessions were made to satisfy German economic and political demands, the ruling classes were not willing to give up their policy of the strong hand. The victory of the arrow-cross movement would have been equivalent to the collapse of their rule.

As regards their relationship to the arrow-cross movement, these circles were getting in a particular situation also in home politics. The ruling classes are absolutely in need of the reactionary influence of the broad masses of the petty bourgeoisie (if possible, of the proletariat, too) to be able to maintain their counterrevolutionary system based on the most profound class differences, to prevent the emergence of a truly democratic and socialist popular movement, to confine within narrow limits their Social Democratic and Smallholders' opposition which they intimidated, last but not least, by harping on the extreme rightist "danger". It is obvious, too, that the coming into power of a fascist mass party is not a simple change of government. It means, among others, that the ruling circles are forced to hand over the direct control of state power to the general staff of the fascist movement, must put up with the more or less radical change of the internal structure of the ruling classes, must accept, at least for some time the fulfilment of a feasible minimum of social improvement promised before, and the like. As a consequence of all this, the "traditional" ruling circles, or some of their prominent groups, have to choose this way; but — as is shown by many examples in history — they do so only at the cost of severe internal strife, come to terms with the fascist leaders reluctantly, even if a powerful, truly revolutionary popular movement threatens the very existence of their class rule.

In the given circumstances the Hungarian ruling circles did not realize any immediate danger of a serious leftist popular movement; moreover, they experienced a further loss of power of the left wing in 1938—1939. They attributed this "success" to their traditional means of rule; these means seemed sufficient to them for preventing the development of a major revolutionary movement, especially when they amplified them with further terroristic, fascist methods as practised by them. They did not feel menaced directly from the left to such an extent as would have prompted them to play their last trump-card and put into action the arrow-cross mass movement. But they were increasingly confused by the social arrow-cross demagoguery, by the growing activity of the petty bourgeoisie, of backward proletarian masses, which — however extreme rightist — assumed the proportions of a mass movement. The ruling class was far from feeling a necessity of yielding power to a fascist mass party; they rather regarded the arrow-cross movement as a factor that gave nourishment to the oppositionist sentiment of the masses instead of absorbing it. The labile nature and the anachronistic

structure of the counterrevolutionary regime were reflected in all this, in a peculiar, distorted form, quasi turned upside down. Although the ruling circles failed to think over all this knowingly, they had a vague feeling that the sine qua non of their regime was the complete immobility of the masses; that they owed their rule not to their influence on the masses, but rather to the complete exclusion of the masses from exercising power.

The analysis of the image and social basis of the arrow-cross movement can also serve as an answer to the question why the "more respectable" layers of the genteel extreme right were entertaining so mixed feelings towards the movement; why they relied on it, made reference to it — as appears from Imrédy's ideas — in trying to curb and subject the masses to their leadership.⁹⁷

The inherent contradictions of the arrow-cross mass movement soon became manifest also in the differences between the leaders and between leading groups. Throughout its existence, the party was marked by internal struggles, by machinations and conspiracies within the circles of chieftains and lieutenants. And in a movement whose leading stratum is made up of extreme-reactionary political climbers, of opportunists rejecting even the fundamental principles of political morals, of lumpen elements and the like, this is only too natural; such elements regarded the party just as their private hunting-grounds, as a stepping-stone to their political, financial or positional career. Yet behind these baffling personal and group differences, the political content and background was becoming distinct in many a case.

Up to the arrest of Szálasi, the differences were manifest only in the bud. Up to May 1938, the leaders were unanimous in hoping for a compromise with the government, and for getting into power in a legal way. After the lifting of his police surveillance, Szálasi stated his views as a respectable and level-headed "statesman" to a number of foreign correspondents; he expounded the objectives of Hungarism in a self-confident manner, sure of an early victory.⁹⁸ But in early summer confidential gendarmerie reports revealed that "there are differences between Szálasi and Hubay since Szálasi is said to insist on employing at the party centre all those who have been

⁹⁷ See Imrédy's memorandum of November 1938, cited above.

⁹⁸ For instance, on June 30, 1938, Szálasi granted an interview to Emily C. Hauptmond, the delegate of the Baltimore newspapers' syndicate. He declared that after taking over power, "we shall demolish the remainder of mediaeval feudalism, the big estates, will transform them into peasant and small, entailed estates" . . . "Hungarism will build a peasant state and will therefore not develop manufacturing industries . . . and will create an agricultural industry that is altogether absent from the Carpathian-Danube basin at present" . . . "after taking over we shall reframe our customs tariff and will grant preference industrial tariffs to states that are members of our ideological community" . . . "to solve the permanent Jewish problem of Hungary, we shall adopt more radical measures than other European states do." OL.Bm. Szálasi Trial, Roll 1.

placed under police surveillance together with him. But Hubay objects, since there are people among these who, before joining the Hungarist movement actively, had been communists".⁹⁹ But what was actually involved here was not the relation to communism, since communists were to be found in the movement but sporadically, and in the leading stratum not at all;¹⁰⁰ the issue was actually the relationship to the activists, to fascist "radicalism", the methods of mass movement, illegal actions, social demagogy, the legal or putsch-like manner of taking over power, etc.

Szálasi could not be regarded as the leader of the "radical" anarchist wing. The attitude of the former staff-officer remained dominating in his personality; social problems were pushed in the background by his gentleman-officer chauvinism; conservative religious and moral views were predominant in him throughout, and he regarded his social "mission" as some aggrandized form of the officer's or civil servant's duties. Yet the nebulosity of his ideology allows of several social interpretations; and his abstract fanaticism, which was void of any rational control, gave free play to the political opportunists of the genteel middle class and to the "radical" group of activists alike. His role in the movement was exactly this: to unite and hold together within the ideological veil of mist of Hungarism the two wings of the party, the genteel middle class and the "radical" petty bourgeoisie.

Kálmán Hubay, on the other hand, was the direct breed of the Gömbös era: a hard-core cynic, he was clever and well-informed enough to form a more realistic picture of Szálasi. He was clever enough to see the measure of fascist "radicalism" that can still be tolerated by the regime in power, how far oppositionism can be driven without provoking an overt break with the ruling circles, and how they should act to please Nazi Germany in a more adroit way.

As we have seen, during the period following the Anschluss the Hungarist Party was attracting more and more leaders of the arrow-cross factions and extreme rightist organizations.¹⁰¹ These joinings strengthened in the group of leaders Hubay's more cautious line, the trend for pursuing a legal policy. After Szálasi's arrest, the leading layer derived from the middle class became increasingly prominent.¹⁰² In given circumstances, the arrest of this rigid,

⁹⁹ P.I.Cs. j. ö. July 1, 1938.

¹⁰⁰ This is not to mean that some of them — such as Ferenc Kassai-Schallmayer — should have been connected with leftist movements, too.

¹⁰¹ It was at time that Count Miklós Serényi, Lajos Gruber, and two deputies of the government party, Dr. Kálmán Rácz and Artur Haám, joined the Hungarist Party. Resignations from the National Front for joining them, starting early 1939, also increased the number of the supporters of Hubay's line.

¹⁰² "The Party gained strength through this", said Hubay in court, "since there were many undisciplined, confused elements in the erratically organized Hungarist

maniacal Szálasi, incapable of any political elasticity, was clearly advantageous to the great majority of the arrow-cross leaders and to the movement as a whole; they got rid of him while he was surrounded with the halo of a martyr at the same time. The name of the leader, languishing in prison for his "principles", was rising to a mythical symbol in the eyes of the misled rank and file of the movement; and this was successfully exploited by the leading group. Beginning from that time, one chair — Szálasi's symbolic seat — was always left empty at arrow-cross meetings; and the number of the inmate of Szeged prison became the symbol of an early victory.

Meanwhile Hubay and his group started eradicating the "too radical" features of the movement, and pushing back the old activist guard. This endeavour was required both by the internal and external situation of the movement. Germany had no intention of bringing the party to power by external action; on the contrary, German interests expected the party to take the way to legal political combat more emphatically.¹⁰³ Hubay and his men soon came to see that this German intention was real. Namely in late autumn 1938 a too radical arrow-cross mass movement would have involved the danger of creating an irreconcilable gulf between Germany and the Horthyist, aristocratic-capitalist circles scared of the arrow-cross subversive activities. Also the events in Roumania served as a warning to the German government: the extreme fascist movement in Roumania, the Iron Guard, was getting entangled in a bitter battle with the ruling strata of that country. The leaders of the Iron Guard were arrested, 14 of them executed, and even their leader, Codreanu, met his fate. Beginning from that time, the differences between the ruling circles and the Iron Guard gave rise to public disturbances that lasted for years. Although Hubay repeated his threats in Magyarság in a rather cautious form that if the government would employ terror against the arrow-cross movements, a similar "catastrophe", i.e. an armed clash might take place also in Hungary,¹⁰⁴ the events in Roumania urged the German government and the arrow-cross leaders to curb arrow-cross "radicalism" lest things should come to a crisis with the Hungarian ruling strata. What Nazi Germany needed was an arrow-cross movement in Hungary, strong enough to be feared and respected, but not strong enough

Movement, even among the leaders . . ." Bm.Nb. Kálmán Hubay's Trial, pp. 12-13. According to Count Fidél Pálffy, leader of the more "moderate" United National Socialist Party, Hubay has led the party after Szálasi's imprisonment "in a direction that was more acceptable to me and to my party". Bm.Nb. Fidél Pálffy's Trial, p. 79.

¹⁰³ For instance, early 1939 the official German press featured Rosenberg's declaration that the Nazi party gives no support to national socialist parties of other countries.

¹⁰⁴ Magyarság, December 3, 1938.

to induce severe resistance and to damage the contradictory yet close relations that existed between Germany and the ruling Hungarian circles.

In addition to all these considerations, there was the poor organizational state of the movement itself. Early November 1938, Emil Kovarcz, who had been put in charge of national organizatory work immediately after his joining, was instructed by party leaders to assess the organizational strength of the party for preparing a putsch planned for the near future. The outcome was discouraging for the arrow-cross people: Kovarcz could not help but conclude and inform the leadership that, although party influence was considerable, there was only a "party mood", but no organized power whatever, and that "the party is neither fit nor able of any . . . collective action".¹⁰⁵

In such circumstances the issue whether an attempt should be made at taking over power by violence was soon struck from the agenda, even in some extremist leading circles of the party, actually before this possibility was discussed seriously. Hubay demanding "legality", the "radical" Kovarcz, as well as Sándor Csia, the middleman between these two, unanimously took the stand that the slogan "1938 is ours" was out of date, and that the "constitutional" way must be taken.¹⁰⁶ "Anyway", said Kovarcz before the court in 1945, "all of us came to the conclusion that to spark off a revolution before the war was no longer possible, so the revolutionary idea should be kept alive as a possibility, but should be handled with caution lest it break out and the reins slip out of our hands."¹⁰⁷

Thus the controversy between the leaders was not actually centred round the question of take-over, but rather round the problem of the activists, what to do with the adherents of the "revolutionary" method, and how far the "radical" fascist practices should be curbed. Kovarcz, speaking for the more "radical" elements, demanded even if the time was not convenient for taking over power, to maintain the "revolutionary" methods and to combine them with legal political practice, as this was the precondition to preserve the mass influence of the party. On the other hand, Hubay and the majority of the leaders emphasized the necessity of legality and parliamentary combat, demanded to put an end to illegal organizatory work, to curb social demagoguery, and considered the "revolutionary" methods untimely as these only "would expose the party to unnecessary persecution".¹⁰⁸ "Hubay", writes Sombor-Schweinitzer, "tried to oust the troublemakers from the party, but the inner party opposition (the old Hungarists for the most

¹⁰⁵ Bm.Nb. The Trial of Emil Kovarcz before the People's Tribunal.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

part; author's remark) believed that Hubay's purging action was only a pretext for expelling Szálasi's followers, since Hubay wanted to concentrate all power in his hands.¹⁰⁹

But to drive back "radicalism" and the activists did not succeed at one blow, nor was it complete. On the one hand, the leaders needed the services of the activist groups as these were important in respect to mass relations, if only because of the coming elections however uncertain their date was; on the other hand, these terrorist-anarchist elements were not easy to drive back and often crossed Hubay's plans by independent actions.

The awkward position of the leaders was also aggravated by the fact that they had voiced the slogan "1938 is ours" unscrupulously for several months, but the "year of victory" they had announced drew to its close. They feared that putting off the take-over for an uncertain time would disillusion the mobilized members of the party and those misguided masses who were confident of an early and easy victory.

A queer play-acting began: the arrow-cross leaders, who took efforts to drive back fascist "radicalism", now themselves staged spectacular "revolutionary" actions just to prove that they intend to fulfil their promises in taking over power. Yet their ulterior purpose was to find an outlet for the zeal of the activists, to divert them in a "not dangerous" direction as far as possible; to provoke reprisals — not too serious ones if possible — against the movement, which would result in a more efficient intervention by the Germans, and under whose cover the slogan of take-over could be struck off the agenda without involving a cheap compromise, and the pushing back of arrow-cross "radicalism" could be carried out.

One of these spectacular actions was the issuance of Hubay's "activist order" on November 22, 1938, the time of the crisis of Imrédy's government; for some mysterious, insinuating purpose the members of the movement were ordered to "be on the alert", party members were ordered not to leave their place of residence, to stay within the organization centres as far as possible, so "that the party leadership be in the position to keep the brethren informed of the official position taken by the Hungarist movement and of the latest events".¹¹⁰ This mobilization was called off after a few days. Already on November 23, Hubay declared in a speech held in the presence of the Budapest "bench-holders" of the party that this mobilization should not be regarded as the preparation for some putsch: "The Hungarist Movement is tremendously strong, so there is no need for a putsch any more. He who

¹⁰⁹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 28.

¹¹⁰ "Activist Order!" *Magyarország*, November 23, 1938.

knows that his wealthy relative is dying, knows that he will inherit, but kills that poor person and plunders him, is a fool." And the new slogan was born of Hubay's words: "1938 was ours — and in 1939 we shall build up our Hungarist State."¹¹¹

On December 1, 1938, they staged a grandiose demonstration in Budapest, which was not only a success, but — as concerns the plans of the leaders — was even "too successful": control slipped out of the hands of the leader group, and the result was severe riots. The demonstration was planned for the evening of December 1 by the party committee itself for the stated purpose of demanding the release of arrow-cross people detained in Illava Prison. "But the fact was", Sombor-Schweinitzer concluded correctly, "that 1938, for which the leadership had promised the take-over, was drawing to its close, so they deemed it necessary to stage a grandiose demonstration which was intended to prove that the party leadership is ready to take over power in the revolutionary way if need be." "It has been found", he writes, "that the members of the Hungarist Movement were marching out on December 1, and offered resistance in many instances to the police, led by this conviction and by the hope of taking over power."¹¹²

The number of arrow-cross people taking part in this demonstration was more than ten thousand. There were bloody fights between the police and the demonstrators in many a place; 21 demonstrators — with two severely wounded among them — had to be taken to the hospital, and two policemen were wounded, too. There was even an arrow-cross "martyr" among the demonstrators: a man named Mátyás Bakos, allegedly a Hungarist who had come from the country, was killed during the demonstration. Some days later it was found out that Bakos had been shot by one of his companions by mistake, but this did not prevent the arrow-cross press from trumping up the accident as a Hungarian Horst Wessel affair.¹¹³

Although the December 1 demonstration aroused intense repugnance and excitement in the anti-fascist public, it doubtlessly promoted the respect for the movement among the petty bourgeois and proletarian strata that were dissatisfied with the state of affairs, as these saw in this action — like in the others — a proof of the party's militant, radical attitude. Behind Hubay's back, or with his reluctant consent, the activists exploited this demonstration for a further stirring of their unscrupulous demagoguery; in a flood of illegal leaflets they were promising wonders to their followers, attacked

¹¹¹ *Magyarság*, November 24, 1938.

¹¹² SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 34.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p. 36. In Parliament Hubay accused the government of Mátyás Bakos' death in the same tone.

the government, the police. "You hirelings of the Jews, you cop murderers . . . who were shooting at us, thrusting your bayonets into us",¹¹⁴ said one leaflet addressed to the police, "when will the guns turn up with which we shall exterminate this regime and help Hungarism to victory, when will the ropes turn up for inflicting deserved punishment on this regime . . .?"¹¹⁵ "Our coming Hungarist State will solve the land reform by all means, as there are available for realizing our Hungarist land reform not 5, but more than 10 million acres", another leaflet read.¹¹⁶

All these actions in late 1938, especially the demonstration of December 1, deepened the fear the ruling circles felt, and resulted in even more drastic measures of the police against the terrorist elements; Hubay's leading group was in this way getting rid of the "radical" group of activists with police assistance. In connection with the demonstration of December 1, the police arrested 348 arrow-cross men, took into custody 46 of them, and instituted administrative proceedings against 49.¹¹⁷ Illegal arrow-cross groups, makers of illegal leaflets, armed activist squads, belonging to the "black" line of the party were detected in turn during December of that year.¹¹⁸

The so-called "ideology-propagating" group was arrested on December 22. It was found out that this terrorist organization, headed by the most notorious, old Hungarists — such as Ferenc Balthazár, József Klima, András Kindornai, and the like — had not showed up regularly at the party premises to save the appearance of the party's legality, but had designed at secret gatherings the following actions: murderous attempts on public figures, including the Minister of Interior, hand-grenade attacks against synagogues, etc.

The arrests revealed the deepening internal differences between Hubay's leading group and the old Hungarists. On one member of the ideology-propagating group, the police found the instruction of the underground group of the movement, calling upon its members to reject any activity of the party that was based on legality; if the party leadership should continue to direct the movement against "the spirit of Szálasi", they would make public the material of the negotiations between Hubay and the Germans, as well as the instruction given formerly by Count Lajos Széchenyi, the titular lieutenant of

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 36.

¹¹⁵ *Hungarista Híradó*, December 1938.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 34.

¹¹⁸ The most important of these was the Black Front, and the military squad formed on the SS pattern in December 1938, after the detection of the "Order and Defence Group"; when the latter was liquidated in January 1939, 86 persons were arrested; part of them was interned or brought to court. *Ibid.* p. 38.

the party, to Ferenc Balthazár to kill Minister of Interior Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer and his brother, the former chief of staff.¹¹⁹

In response to drastic police measures, the activists organized further actions; the most consequential of these was the hand-grenade attempt on the synagogue in Dohány Street on February 3, 1939, as a result of which 22 people — ten of them older than 60 — were injured.¹²⁰ As it turned out later on, this attempt was an "independent" action of one group of the arrow-cross terrorists, but Emil Kovarcz, head of the national organization work, the fugleman of the "radical" wing of the leaders, was involved in the preparation of the attempt. Summary jurisdiction was proclaimed by the Minister of Interior on February 4; the government decided to ban the Hungarian Party. On February 24, the police searched the premises of 57 arrow-cross leaders; warrants of apprehension were issued against eight leading activists who had fled to Germany.¹²¹

Only two people of the leading group were allowed to go at large: Kálman Hubay, known for his political "soundness", and László Baký, who, in addition to his other functions, was active as a police informer.¹²² The government resolution banning the party listed the unlawful acts of the Hungarian National Socialist Party — Hungarian Movement, the functioning of the secret organizations called National Party Discipline and Party Defence Department, etc., the distribution of illegal leaflets, the demonstration of December 1, the attempt against the worshippers of the synagogue in Dohány Street. "It appears from all this", the resolution concluded, "that the acts of the Hungarian National Socialist Party — Hungarian Movement, as well as the persons fanaticized by it, endanger the security of the State, social order, public order and security to such an extent that the dissolution of the party and the prohibition of its further functioning are not only justified, but also a matter of absolute and pressing necessity."¹²³

The decree of February 24, 1939, dissolving the party, was issued not by the Imrédy Government, but by the new government of Count Pál Teleki, appointed on February 15.

¹¹⁹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 37–38.

¹²⁰ See *Népszava*, February 4, 1939; *Magyarság*, February 4, 1939.

¹²¹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, pp. 39–40. 127 Arrow-Cross Party premises were closed down when the party was dissolved. The register of the secret party members was found, containing 700 civil servants among others. *Magyar Nemzet*, February 25 and 26, 1939.

¹²² *Bm.Nb.* The Trial of Emil Kovarcz before the People's Tribunal.

¹²³ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 39–41.

THE MAY 1939 ELECTIONS. THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT
AT THE TOP OF ITS INFLUENCE

Did the appointment of Teleki as Prime Minister bring some change to the attitude of the Hungarian ruling strata? It did; but these changes did not affect the principal questions of foreign and home policy. The appointment of Teleki clearly showed that the Horthyist ruling circles tried to draw the "lesson" of the past period considering the increasingly complicated and delicate international and home situation; they were seeking safeguards for realizing their basically unchanged political aims more consistently, avoiding such "undesirable" events and disturbing phases as happened at the time of Darányi or Imrédy. In the person of Teleki, a full representative of the ruling strata was occupying the Prime Minister's post, charged with the principal duty of finding an outlet for the tension and unrest created by the extreme right at home, and, in the field of foreign policy, to achieve "revision" to the fullest extent possible without further subordination to nazi Germany. So there was no substantial change whatsoever in the political conception; hence the consequences of this policy were not expected to change either, in respect of long-range plans at least.

This fact was proved not only by the Teleki Government's activities later on, in summer and autumn 1940, but already by the circumstances surrounding Teleki's appointment. In mid-February 1939, the ruling circles decided to force Imrédy to resign once for all only when it became increasingly evident that Imrédy was not willing to identify himself in home politics with the intentions of the aristocratic-capitalist circles, and that he tried to alter the existing complexion of the government party, or to replace it by a middle class-petty bourgeois fascist mass movement, by calling into being his so-called Hungarian Life Movement,¹²⁴ and not until they had paved the way for Imrédy's resignation "properly": the second anti-Jewish bill was introduced officially, the "agrarian reform" project, tailored to fit the demands of the aristocracy and the big landowners, was elevated to the rank of a government programme, and the National Defence Act, accelerating the militarization of the country's economic and social life by strides, was passed in January; not until the Hungarian ruling circles, giving up the plan of an "independent" (i.e. behind Germany's back) occupation of the Carpathian Ukraine, had again subordinated their revisionist designs to Germany's decisions altogether, and undertook further far-reaching obligations at the side of the fascist powers (joining the Anticomintern Pact, withdrawal from the League of Nations). Regaining nazi Germany's "benevo-

¹²⁴ The Hungarian Life Movement was proclaimed in January 1939 by Imrédy and his closest followers, Jenő Rátz, Andor Jaross, Bálint Hóman, etc.

lence", making further concessions to the extreme right — i.e. adopting and realizing most of Imrédy's aims — they felt that the time had come for dismissing Imrédy, for soothing the extreme right behind Imrédy by "appeasing" it, and for taking measures against the arrow-cross mass movement that was increasingly annoying them. It was not by chance that this event threw sharp light on the substance of this policy, that the Hungarist Party was outlawed some days after Hungary had joined the Anticomintern Pact officially.

The proscription of the Hungarist Party was a hard blow to the arrow-cross movement. The proscriptive decision involved severe measures against arrow-cross leaders and activists, many people were arrested and interned. The steps taken against extremist groups were also stricter than the former ones.¹²⁵

All this showed that Teleki tried to suppress the arrow-cross movement more seriously and with more conviction than did his predecessors. But, despite his firm anti-arrow-cross attitude, he also failed to carry on a steadfast fight against them; for considerations of foreign and home policy, he also kept to the line that had become "traditional" since the time of Darányi: he only dared to oppose them — and not the movement as a whole, only its "radical", terroristic wing — parallel with making concessions to the genteel extreme right and to Nazi Germany.

Most of the arrow-cross leaders were released soon. Two weeks after the proscription of the Hungarist Party, early March 1939, the Teleki Government approved the reorganization of their mass party, going under the name of Arrow-Cross Party. When Hubay reported to Parliament the formation of the "new" party, he struck a most loyal chord and presented as the founder of the party — besides himself — some "respectable" good names such as *vitéz* István Dobó, retired lieutenant general, Dezső Mokcsay, retired staff colonel, Artur Bogyai, royal chamberlain, retired colonel of cavalry, and János Halmai, retired captain.¹²⁶

According to available sources, Hubay and Baky had promised in preliminary talks with government members that the party would change over to the "disciplined, constitutional" line.¹²⁷ And indeed: having got rid of most of the old "radicals" they started to curb the movement, to eliminate the "radical" features, and were meeting with no serious internal resistance for some time.

¹²⁵ The assailants of the Dohány Street Synagogue received severe sentences, those of illegal armed groups detected before were aggravated, etc.

¹²⁶ *Képviselőházi Napló* [The Journals] March 8, 1939.

¹²⁷ Bm.Nb. Trial of Emil Kovarcz.

This appeared clearly from the programme of the Arrow-Cross Party, proclaimed on March 15, 1939,¹²⁸ which broke altogether with extremist demands — even if somewhat covertly, and not quite clearly understood by the masses — and handled even social demagoguery very cautiously. The programmes of the arrow-cross movement published and intended for the use in official political life were always most moderate in tone. But the 1939 March programme — which was proclaimed after the "radical" year of 1938 — was outstanding among all of them with its loyal attitude. It was obvious that Hubay and his men had formulated this programme to suit the tastes of the Horthyist big landowners. There was not one word about Szálasi's Hungarism in it. And the objectives of foreign policy might as well have been formulated by the Horthyist ruling circles themselves: the programme declared that it did not accept the Trianon Peace Treaty, that it adheres to the state conception of Saint Stephen under the "rule of the Regent". The only arrow-cross phrase in this context was that a certain closely not defined "self-government" was envisaged for the nationalities living in integrated groups in Hungary. The economic planks of the party platform declared that the party accepts the principle of private ownership, although "the manner of management is not regarded as a private affair". The concrete demands were restricted to liquidate unemployment, to create better financial conditions for the intelligentsia, the entrepreneurs and the civil servants, to nationalize the munitions industry for a further development of the army, and to nationalize the major sources of energy. Compared to the demagoguery of past months, the manner in which the programme handled the land reform was particularly conspicuous: "We want an agrarian reform", the platform proclaimed, "which is able to increase national production . . . Anybody who advocates different views is a demagogue . . ." Besides this, there was only a cloudy indication that the subdivision of 20—100-acre holdings must be prevented, and "where the conditions of viable small-holdings are given, those worthy of it will be given land by taking into account also the requirements of national defence". It appears, then, that this kind of "land reform" might have been proclaimed by Imrédy himself, or late in the thirties even by Count István Bethlen. The only issue in which the platform was as "irreconcilable" as before was the Jewish question; after repeating the notorious anti-Jewish economic demands, the platform declared that Jewry is regarded as a race, and what it demands is a "Hungarian state free from Jews", and a "classless society standing on Christian foundations".

In the course of the occupation by the Germans of what had been left of

¹²⁸ "This is What the Arrow-Cross Wants." *Magyarország*, March 15, 1939.

Czechoslovakia, Hitler granted permission to Hungary to occupy the Carpathian Ukraine. This further "aggrandisement" of the country was received with sweeping enthusiasm by the right and the extreme right, and the fear of the German menace was again pushed into the background for some time, even in the conservative-independent wing of the ruling circles. The incorporation of Carpathian Ukraine marked the beginning of a new period in the life of the Teleki Government. Teleki and the top ruling strata felt that, compared to the autumn and winter of 1938, their position had become consolidated in both home and foreign policy: they had scored further success in respect of territorial revision; they had succeeded in driving back Imrédy; arrow-cross demagogy and "disturbances" began to subside, partly as a result of a stricter attitude of the government, partly because of the "self-control" of Hubay and his men. Teleki considered the situation suitable for consolidating his position, and for taking more resolute steps for realizing his "independent" conservative-counterrevolutionary ideas.

Hungary's international position was influenced by three circumstances at that time. First, that after the occupation of Carpathian Ukraine, there was no prospect of further territorial revision with German assistance, for the time being at least. Second, that Germany had put on the agenda the Polish question, i.e. the crushing of that Poland to which the Hungarian ruling circles were attached by firm ties of friendship so widely propagated before the public. Third, that after the occupation and dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, international anti-fascist indignation was increasing and the resistance against further German expansion was growing stronger also in the ruling circles of the Western Powers. Faced with this situation, Teleki took steps for a certain loosening up of German-Hungarian relations; although maintaining the fundamental pro-German line of Hungarian foreign policy, he rejected the German demands to make use of Hungary's active support to the planned aggression against Poland. It was at that time that Teleki's foreign-policy conception, called "armed neutrality" later on and doomed to complete failure in the long range, was developing including all its retrograde contradictions: an alliance with nazi Germany, to be "counterbalanced" by relying on Italy — which actually represented no independent power any more — and by maintaining the very scanty western relations; and all this focussed on the objective that Hungary should realize the "revision" at the cost of Roumania by "itself".

As concerns the home situation, Teleki had no firm base at all within his "own" party, the government party, and consequently not even in Parliament, at the time he formed his government. His rigidly reactionary attitude, rejecting even the Hungarian "seignorial" liberalism, prevented him

from the outset from opening the door to any trend of a more democratic shade; all he was able to achieve in the beginning was to try to make himself acceptable to the extreme right by using various political manoeuvres. As we have seen, he undertook to carry out Imrédy's steps in the field of home and foreign policy without any overt criticism; he retained the cabinet members of the Imrédy Government, moreover he recommended as his successor on the portfolio of the Minister of Education Bálint Hóman, one champion of Imrédy and the Hungarian Life Movement. His labile position was reflected most clearly by the trends within the government party: by the end of February 1939, the Party of National Unity was reshaped into the Party of Hungarian Life. This was seemingly only a formal change of name, but in reality it meant much more: what was involved here was another compromise of the "constitutional"-counterrevolutionary, "independent" wing, weakened by the withdrawal of the "dissidents" in autumn 1938, with the extreme right wing of the government party subjected increasingly to the leadership of Imrédy; it was possible only in this way to create some rear-guard for Teleki. Needless to say, the "success" of these steps was promoted basically by Teleki's political views: his irreconcilable chauvinism, supported by the authority of the geographer, and his anti-Jewish convictions. From his policy speech in Parliament to the debate of the anti-Jewish bill in the Upper House, he emphasized repeatedly that he had identified himself with the second anti-Jewish Act not because of tactical considerations, but out of conviction, and, moreover, that among the members of the Imrédy Government he had represented the most radical views in the Jewish question.¹²⁹

Yet despite all this, Teleki, who was setting about realizing his designs really and truly at that time, badly needed a firmer basis both in the government party and in Parliament, and had to create a more lasting state of rest for the Horthyist ruling circles. It was an outcome of these considerations that they decided in April to dissolve Parliament prematurely and to call a new — hitherto dreaded — election.

As is well known, the ruling circles of Hungary were no longer able to delay the modification of the badly anachronistic open voting system in the second half of the thirties. The new electoral law, passed in 1938, extended the secrecy of ballot all over the country. Yet in return suffrage was restricted further: the age qualification was raised to 26 years, the residential qualification to six years, conditions of qualification were made stricter in the so-called individual constituencies, nomination was made conditional on high amounts of caution-money, and so on. Despite these reactionary "guaran-

¹²⁹ Népszava, April 1, 1939.

tees" the ruling circles regarded the election to be held pursuant to the new Act as a dangerous "leap into the dark" which might clear the way to the "extremists", the Left first of all.

Add to this the fear of the forging ahead of the extreme rightist, arrow-cross movement during 1938: up to the beginning of 1939 it was not the ruling circles that urged the calling of elections, it was rather the extreme right. The memorandum of Bethlen, written to the Regent in January 1939 — cited in another context¹³⁰ — reflected these alarms still more clearly: to halt the Imrédyist and arrow-cross advance was considered indispensable just because of the coming election. This memorandum threw light on the reactionary subservient policy of the ruling circles at the same time: the precondition of a "successful" election was defined as the satisfaction of the principal demand of the extreme right, first of all the enactment of a new anti-Jewish law. All this — amplified by a further "increase of national territory" — was realized by spring 1939. Thus the government held a number of electoral "trumps" — in addition to the measures against the radical arrow-cross groups — which were correlated with the objectives of the extreme right and the pro-German attitude; and it was these questions that were put in the focus of the electoral campaign.

The regental ordinance dissolving the chamber of deputies was issued on May 4th, some days after the enactment of the second anti-Jewish Bill; a bare three weeks were left to the opposition to prepare for the elections settled for May 28 and 29. But the government was looking for more "safeguards". They tried to curtail the electoral chances of the arrow-cross by some measures, of which there was only one that hit really home: *Magyarság* was proscribed for three months, so the Arrow-Cross Party was deprived of their official daily paper for the time of the electoral campaign. But the heaviest fire was again aimed at the persecuted, decimated Left that was in an extremely precarious situation anyway. The relations of the Teleki Government towards the Left were clearly illustrated by a confidential declaration made by the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs to official German circles early in 1939, after the proscription of the Hungarist Party: to "counterbalance" the banning of the arrow-cross mass party, the prospect of prohibiting the Social Democratic Party was held out to the Germans.¹³¹ It was

¹³⁰ Miklós Horthy's Secret Papers, pp. 206–207.

¹³¹ "Graf Csáky fügte seiner Bitte um streng vertrauliche Behandlung hinzu, die Regierung werde demnächst auch die Sozialdemokratische Partei verbieten . . . Damit werde eine gewisse Parität zu der Auflösung der Hungaristenpartei hergestellt." [To his request for a strictly confidential handling of the matter, Count Csáky added that government is going to prohibit also the Social Democratic Party . . . to establish a certain counterbalance to the dissolution of the Hungarist Party] GFM-2-1881. Erdmannsdorff's report of March 1, 1939.

obvious, however, that the government did not actually intend to realize this plan, as this was only meant as a political manoeuvre to appease Nazi Germany. Yet the fact remains that in the very climax of the electoral campaign they decided to launch a large-scale provocation against the trade-union movement and the Social Democratic Party. This was based on the thin pretext that the trade unions used part of their receipts to the "illicit" backing of leftist political movements. So the government started an investigation, announced with great publicity, against the trade-union movement. In one of his electoral speeches Teleki said that his "aim is to liberate labour from the trade-union terror" . . . "which is no longer a programme of the future, but a process taking place before our very eyes".¹³²

Although aware of their considerable influence on the masses, the arrow-cross staff were not too happy to learn that the elections were to be held soon; they feared that after the prohibition of the Hungarist Party they would not be able to reshuffle their ranks in so short a time. They also were worried because of the financial situation of the movement: only 150 pengős were said to have been found as party funds at the time of the proscription.¹³³ But they were not discouraged all the same. The lack of funds was not worrying them particularly: part of the deposits required for nominations were granted to them in the form of personal loans by the Hungarian branches of the German banks.¹³⁴ The largest sum they received was sent through illegal channels to the arrow-cross leaders by German agents who bought up more than 500 000 pengős in Switzerland during the days following the dissolution of the chamber of deputies.¹³⁵ Also a considerable portion of the arrow-cross propaganda material was printed in Germany. In addition, Hubay and his men were ready to nominate any opportunist — where the chances were promising — who had money enough, or a proper social "standing", irrespective of whether such person was or was not a member of the movement. They were again lining up the available groups of the "radicals" well versed in mass propaganda; and their displeasure with neglecting them at the nominations while their services were needed was tackled by telling them that the financial situation of the movement was poor, so they had to make use of these self-appointed candidates who had money or a good standing, but these would have no say in the party anyway.¹³⁶ Thus a list was drawn up

¹³² *Népszava*, May 18, 1939.

¹³³ Bm.Nb. Kálmán Hubay's Trial, Vol. I.

¹³⁴ Bm.Nb. Trial of László Endre and accomplices, Vol. II. László Baký's testimony, p. 179.

¹³⁵ The government obtained knowledge of the financial operation; Teleki himself mentioned it in public at the first session of Parliament convened after the election. *The Journals*, June 14, 1939.

¹³⁶ TÖRÖK ANDRÁS: *Szálasi álarc nélkül* [Szálasi unmasked], Budapest, 1940, p. 43.

on which the 63 candidates of the party included — considering only the "radical" Arrow-Cross Party — 10 landowners, 11 lawyers, 8 retired army officers, 5 journalists, 6 engineers, 2 pastors, as well as clerks, employees of the post, of the local train system, doctors, and teachers; and only three "smallholders", one tradesman and one worker.

The arrow-cross people were utilizing all advantages of the inflamed extreme rightist political atmosphere, and turned it to their benefit. They entered an electoral agreement for setting up the candidates with the other national socialist groups, the United National Socialist Party of Fidél Pálffy, the National Front of Salló, the group of Matolcsy, etc.¹³⁷ The arrow-cross was especially successful in profiting from their close relations with the local administrative bodies; this administrative machinery tried to counter by all available means the electoral campaign of the democratic left, the Social Democratic Party first of all, and rendered assistance to the arrow-cross movement that amounted to the measure of help "due" to the government party.¹³⁸ Without any restraint, the arrow-cross simply adapted the contents of their electioneering to local conditions: in Budapest, in the suburbs, in districts inhabited by workers and in small villages they struck a sharp oppositionist tone, but wherever they deemed it expedient they cleverly mingled oppositionism with the tones of loyalty, and where they had set up no candidate, they asked the voters to back the government party.¹³⁹

The elections were held on May 28 and 29. The most important result was the great success of the various extreme rightist groups, the arrow-cross first of all. A very precarious victory for Teleki indeed.¹⁴⁰

The distribution of seats was the following:

Government Party candidates	183 seats (70%)
Christian Party candidates	4 seats
National Socialist parties and candidates	49 seats (18%)
(the Arrow-Cross Party's share amounting to	31 seats)
Smallholders' Party	11 seats
Social Democratic Party	5 seats

Thus there were substantial changes in the distribution of the seats compared to 1935. The seats for the government party showed essentially the same proportion as in 1935. But the government party of 1939, the Party of

¹³⁷ Bm.Nb. Trial of Fidél Pálffy.

¹³⁸ Népszava, May 20, 1939.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ The source of data on the election results to be given in the following is OL. Országgyűlési Levéltár. [Parliamentary Archives] K2, Vol. 792, 1935–1939. Records of the course of elections.

Hungarian Life as it was called then, was much more rightist, reactionary than the Party of National Unity of 1935, not only considering its policy but also in respect of the deputies. Imrédy, who already at that time was the leader of the right wing of the government party, had a considerable influence on the nominations.¹⁴¹ It would seem, however, that in the face of the pressure from the extreme right Teleki got to a certain extent entrapped by his political shortsightedness: he himself had agreed that as many as possible "new", thus far unknown people should be nominated. And the result was that when a number of badly discredited extreme rightist deputies were left out, the "new" men selected from among local potentates increased the number of deputies with extreme rightist views or leanings considerably.

The distribution of Parliament seats showed further that the number of deputies of the Christian Party, standing close to the government party and entering an electoral alliance with the latter, decreased from 14 to 4. This change was seemingly not an important one, since the nature of the Christian Party only differed, if at all, by some royalist traits from that of the government party, let alone the fact that the Christian Party, too, had an important wing that felt drawn towards the extreme right. But the phenomenon of the above change was giving food for thought in one respect: a certain success at the former election scored by the Christian Party candidates, who were voicing religious slogans for the most part, reflected the fact that most of the middle class and the urban petty bourgeoisie displayed an intensely non-political, passive and indifferent attitude, irrespective of their reactionary views. The collapse of the Christian parties at the 1939 election — their former followers were casting their votes for the government party or the arrow-cross parties for the most part — was one reflection of the extreme-rightist, fascist activation of the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie.

But the most spectacular change took place within the composition of the "opposition".

In respect of political attitude and parliamentary importance, the oppositionist Smallholders' Party and Social Democratic Party were rather weak already in 1935; and in the 1939 elections they lost more than half of their seats: as contrasted to 26 seats in 1935, the Smallholders' Party obtained 11 seats, the Social Democratic Party only 5 instead of the former 14. So the actual opposition collapsed, while the extreme rightist, arrow-cross "opposition" advanced dangerously: the overtly fascist parties and groups increased the number of their deputies from 2 to 49, with 31 seats for the Arrow-Cross Party proper.

¹⁴¹ Bm.Nb. Béla Imrédy's Trial. Testimony by dr. Kornél Kelemen.

The extent of the shift to the right is shown even more clearly by the distribution of the votes, and this permits drawing further conclusions in respect of the social basis of the arrow-cross movement. The number of votes cast was well over three millions, but this meant actually much less — about 2 600 000 voters — since part of the voters were voting twice: for the county and municipal lists, and for individual candidates. The political parties shared the votes cast as follows:

MÉP (Party of Hungarian Life)	50 %
Christian Party	3 %
National Socialists	25 %
Liberals	2 %
Smallholders' Party	15 %
Social Democratic Party	4 %

Of all votes — cast for lists and individual constituencies — the Social Democratic Party obtained somewhat over 120 000 for candidates set up in 20-odd constituencies; the Smallholders' Party obtained 580 000 votes in more than 100 constituencies; the arrow-cross and similar groups had set up candidates in 70-odd constituencies and obtained more than 900 000 votes.

The picture is somewhat better if we consider it from the angle of affiliation, and not of the number of votes:

MÉP and Christian parties	60,4 %
Arrow-Cross Party	21,0 %
Smallholders' Party	12,1 %
Social Democratic Party	4,3 %
Civic Freedom Party	2,2 %

The success of the arrow-cross was most conspicuous in the suburbs of Budapest, in Budapest and in Pest County. In the suburbs of Budapest, which included 32 small towns, the arrow-cross was winning with more than 65 000 votes. The proportion of votes cast for the government party and for the Christian Party decreased by 15 per cent. The Civic Freedom Party (Rassay's) dwindled away altogether. The share of the Social Democratic Party declined by more than 16 per cent: while the number of their voters grew by about 50 000 compared to 1935, they received 10 000 votes less than in 1935. The picture was especially negative in the intensely German-populated villages in the vicinity of Budapest, and in the large villages inhabited by workers.

With more than 72 000 votes the Arrow-Cross Party scored second after MÉP in Budapest; the proportion of the Social Democratic Party dropped from 22 per cent in 1935 to 13 per cent.

The results of the elections in the country were much less characteristic of the actual balance of power. Apart from the government party, the other parties had set up candidates only in constituencies where they considered to have good chances, or where — in their judgment — their propaganda had been able to penetrate. The Social Democratic Party, for example, had set up candidates only for six municipal lists, five county lists, and 13 individual constituencies, in addition to the three constituencies of Budapest and the suburbs. So it seems obvious that the number of the S. D. Party's followers must have been much larger than those 70 000 which appeared from the county returns. But the trend there was the same as in Budapest and the suburbs: a more or less severe decline.

The Smallholders' Party, the one of the opposition that had set up candidates in the largest number of constituencies, held their ground in their "traditional" districts such as counties Bihar, Hajdu, Szatmár, in part of the "Stormy Corner" (in southern Hungary), in the southern part of Pest County, etc., but suffered severe losses nevertheless. It is a remarkable phenomenon in this connection that in the constituencies where the arrow-cross had as a rule not set up candidates, the smallholders remained the strongest oppositionist party with a considerable number of votes; but where the arrow-cross were competing with the Smallholders' Party, the former scored second behind the government party in most cases and the smallholders had to put up with a small proportion of the votes. What we have said in the foregoing is intended to show that it was the arrow-cross movement that profited from the oppositionistic sentiments of the voters.

It goes without saying that it is difficult to generalize the data available about an election; the social stratum and class of the voters can be determined but very vaguely. One must fetishize not any election, not overestimate its outcome. We must not forget that this election, too, was held by a counterrevolutionary system which branded the entire course of the campaign and voting; in such circumstances a considerable proportion of people found "fit for voting" by the regime could possibly not express their true will even if secrecy of the ballot was guaranteed. But it would be an even greater mistake if, making reference to these qualifications, we failed to make a profound analysis of the facts and underestimated the lesson this election taught us.

The "conservative"-counterrevolutionary circles of that time, which saw the outcome of the election with rather mixed feelings despite the "success" of the government party, summed up their evaluations by saying that "the

masses of leftist radicalism are now standing at the extreme right side".¹⁴² Needless to say, this conclusion formulated in this way did not correspond to the facts: a considerable proportion of the votes cast for the arrow-cross did not come from the proletarian stratum. Election statistics showed clearly that it was mainly the "middle class", the very numerous stratum of urban and village petty bourgeois, clerks, pensioners, etc. that voted national socialist. The arrow-cross movement was supported also by a sizable proportion of the population of German stock (tradesmen, landed peasants) irrespective of the fact that their candidates were figuring on the list of the government party. Yet all this is by no means intended for denying the fact that a considerable part of the votes for the arrow-cross came from the class of workers, semi-proletarians, the backward layers of industrial workers, miners, and that the arrow-cross, fascist wave had disrupted even the ranks of organized labour in more than one instance. This was admitted after the elections even by *Népszava*; but, unfortunately, proper criticism about part of the workers' class was not accompanied by a similarly proper and necessary self-criticism. "The results of the Whitsun elections are disastrous", wrote the paper, "as it is doubtless that even worker-voters who were faithful to our Party and ideas were split off and lost. There are constituencies and electoral wards in them, where the outcome would not have been as it is unless it was brought about by the workers themselves, by their strata altogether lacking political consciousness and falling easy victim to demagoguery."¹⁴³

¹⁴² *Népszava*, June 3, 1939.

¹⁴³ *Népszava*, May 31, 1939.

III. THE DECLINE OF THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT

1939 — 1941

THE BEGINNINGS OF DECLINE

With the success at the May 1939 elections, the mass influence of the arrow-cross movement reached its peak. Yet two or three months later, there began a downward trend in the movement, even if one or two transitional upswings delayed this decline that set in definitely in summer and early autumn of 1939.

During the period immediately following the elections, there was nothing to show any decline for the time being. The election returns, taking by surprise even the arrow-cross staff in many a respect, enhanced for some time the self-confidence of the extreme right tremendously. In June and July, the informers of the Ministry of Interior reported an intense upswing in the life of the Arrow-Cross Party. At the session of the chamber of deputies, convened for July 14, the arrow-cross deputies showed up with military discipline, wearing their arrow-cross uniforms, as the true winners of the election. As though the seating order in the chamber, "reformed" meanwhile, exemplified the new, reversed political situation: the arrow-cross and national socialist deputies were seated at the left. Their appearance brought a new atmosphere to the chamber of deputies. Not as if any substantial change took place in its activities in merit. Apart from the routine subjects, placed on the agenda year by year, the debates centred round insignificant bills. But, formally, the dead-waters of Parliament were stirred: the arrow-cross deputies struck an extremely sharp oppositionist tone never heard before. Bombastic chauvinistic phrases, which had always been characteristic of the right and extreme right wing in the Hungarian Parliament, were having their feast and were amplified by infuriated anti-Jewish and social demagoguery. It was hardly palpable at that time that behind all this parliamentary demagoguery, behind pushing in the foreground the parliamentary "fighting", there was a great retreat, the resignation of the arrow-cross leaders to the fact that "take-over" was entirely depending on Germany's will; there was the giving up of most of their "radical" putsch methods so highly characteristic of their movement in 1938.

The sharp anti-government statements of arrow-cross and other national socialist deputies were focussed on four questions. They criticized the government for its foreign policy which — in their opinion — was not pro-German enough (it was at that time that Teleki sent his two letters to Hitler informing

him that Hungary was not willing to support Germany actively in a military operation against Poland). They attacked the government because its "delayed and inconsistent" enforcement of the second anti-Jewish Act. They were leading every campaign directed against the weakened democratic and social-democratic opposition. Finally, they were garnishing all this with a loud, demagogic harping on a number of social partial problems. Utilizing the defensive, "cautious" attitude of the smallholder and social democratic opposition, which were afraid of "alienating" the ruling circles and the government, the arrow-cross deputies practically expropriated the social questions.

It was characteristic of this situation that when the social democratic Ferenc Szeder — in his speech of altogether defensive tone — remarked oppositely that "the tone prevailing in this chamber of deputies was not always imbued with so much social feeling as it is now" and reminded of the fact that the Social Democrats had been insisting on these question since 1920, there were such shoutings from the "extreme left": "What do you want here after all?" "What do the socis want here at all? This is clearly ridiculous, this is an antiquated conception."¹

This mood was fairly general in the summer of 1939; a tough left-wing radicalism had been annihilated indeed.

But the "great age" of the arrow-cross movement was not to last long. Beginning from autumn 1939, a decline — slow in the beginning, but accelerating as time passed — took place. This decline was the combined consequence of a number of external and internal factors. Some of these factors had a disintegrating effect on the leading stratum of the arrow-cross movement, and on their followers in the upper, genteel middle class; others resulted in estrangement of the misguided petty bourgeois and proletarian masses, or exerted their effect in a contradictory manner.

The principal cause of decline was correlated with the outbreak of World War II.

The fact that the invasion of Poland was preceded by the conclusion of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, and followed after some days by the declaration of war by Great Britain and France, came very hard on the Hungarian ruling circles and the Teleki Government. This type of war came unexpected not only for the Hungarian ruling circles, but also for the extreme left imbued with the most ferocious anti-Soviet feelings; their attraction felt towards German nazism was correlated with this very anti-Soviet attitude. Their surprise was even increased by the fact that, as appeared from the

¹ The Journals, Vol. I, Session of June 21, 1939.

statements of both Soviet and German leaders, the Soviet-German relationship of neutrality promised to be a lasting one. Needless to say, later events — such as the "suspension of arms" following the invasion of Poland, the period of the "phoney war", and the Soviet-Finnish war from the end of November to March 1940 — raised hopes of another kind. There was the prospect of a rapprochement between the Western Powers and Germany to the detriment of the Soviet Union. Yet all this did not alter the fact that this change in Soviet-German relations — appearing on the surface at least — was a terrific shock to the Hungarian ruling circles, and caused confusion, bewilderment and "disillusion" in the genteel extreme right, and even in the circles of the petty bourgeoisie nurtured on anti-Soviet feelings for many decades. On the other hand, the non-aggression pact produced the opposite effect in certain semi-proletarian and workers' layers that were attached to the arrow-cross movement; for some time their illusions about Germany's "socialist" nature were intensified.

Confronted with such a situation, the arrow-cross general staff was again getting involved in most severe contradictions. Giving up their extreme anti-Soviet attitude would have deteriorated their relations not only with the ruling circles, but also would have resulted in an estrangement of the genteel extreme right, and of the petty bourgeois strata exposed to their reactionary influences largely with the help of the former. Yet it was difficult at the same time to continue voicing their furious anti-Soviet slogans, as this would have incurred Germany's displeasure. Consequently they only joined sporadically those fascist slogans saying that the battle was going on at that time between the "proletarian powers" and the "Jewish-plutocratic" powers. A few newspaper articles, written in a cautious tenor, said that the Soviet Union, severing its "plutocratic-Jewish" and "popular-front" relations, is on the way towards an external and internal "national" transformation;² a few "sympathetic" words about both Finland and the Soviet Union at the time of the Soviet-Finnish war, reference to political realism "which from the outset had rendered the resistance of the freedom-loving Finnish nation hopeless"³ — this was all the leading groups of the Arrow-Cross Party did to show their "objectiveness" towards the Soviet Union. Their conduct was not suited for increasing the sympathy of the masses to any particular measure; nor was it good enough to counterweigh the shock of the genteel, anti-Soviet strata.

² Litvinov's recall as the head of the Foreign Policy Commissariat was interpreted in this manner. The same line of thought appeared in an article written about Voroshilov, published in *Magyarság*, on August 30, 1939.

³ *Magyarság*, March 14, 1940.

So their ambiguous attitude continued to increase the gulf between the arrow-cross movement and the ruling circles.

In such circumstances, the trend of the international situation from the end of August 1939 to late spring 1940 was lending reality and an increasing attractiveness to Teleki's "armed neutrality" conception. Both the Arrow-Cross Party and the other national socialist groups were toning down their anti-government outbursts that had been most violent before.

The circumstance that late in September Teleki refused to comply with the German request to grant free passage to German troops towards Poland did not entail any more severe crisis either. In September Imrédy and his group within the government party started activities to force the government to pursue a more overt and clear-cut pro-Axis policy. Teleki had no special difficulty in taking the wind out of their sails, and the right wing of the government party was not able to enumerate good arguments against what they said: the "attitude of reserve" had proved the best policy till then, and Teleki was not willing to give it up in the future either.⁴ German-Hungarian relations became strained by the end of September 1939, and the only group that tried to benefit from this was the Arrow-Cross Party. But they failed.

Another factor contributing to the decline of the arrow-cross movement was the emergency measures taken at the outbreak of the war. On September 1, 1939, Teleki made a proclamation to the people of Hungary, and announced that government decrees had been passed investing the cabinet with special powers, restricting the right of combination and assembly, extending the system of internment, introducing censorship for both home and foreign printed matter, the rationing of certain material stocks, suspending former provisions relating to the employment in industry, commerce and mining (restricted working hours, paid leave), etc.⁵ The new measures were of importance mainly from the political aspect: the possibilities of free political life, which had been restricted extremely even before, were further curtailed, and the freedom of movement of the democratic and socialist forces, even of the arrow-cross movement, was restricted, especially in the field of "mass activities".

Other factors, such as the general economic situation of Hungary, the economic and social consequences of the reannexations of territories and of the anti-Jewish laws, affected the influence of the arrow-cross movement not directly, but all the more profoundly.

By that time, Hungary's economic situation was marked by the war

⁴ SALY DEZSŐ: *Szigorúan bizalmas* [Strictly Confidential], Budapest, 1945, p. 30.

⁵ *Népszava*, September 2, 1939.

prosperity started by the armaments programme of Győr.⁶ The effects of the economic upward trend were felt for the first time in the second half of 1938; the peak of prosperity was reached between 1939 and 1941, and involved the entire field of economic life. Within this prosperity of some three years, 1939 was especially successful: the value of manufactured goods increased by more than 20 per cent during one year, i.e. by about the growth of the preceding two decades combined; the number of industrial employees grew by 72 000, that of employees in the manufacturing industries by 40 000, and the real wages of workers increased by almost 10 per cent during one year. This prosperity, which more or less eliminated the difficulties of selling agricultural produce, and put an end to urban and rural unemployment, continued during the first half of 1940; a minor slow-down in several fields was only seen in the second half of that year.

Based on a profoundly reactionary home and foreign policy, and on an armaments programme pushed forward at a rapid rate, the improvement in the economic situation was pregnant with sharp contradictions from the outset as a matter of course, and its positive results were but ephemeral. Yet, temporarily, it alleviated the social tensions developing in Hungary, and had a favourable effect on the living standards of the workers and the poor peasantry, even on the standards of the petty bourgeoisie, the clerks, the intelligentsia, and on those of the medium layers in general.

The economic situation and attitude of the higher middle class, the layers of clerks and the intelligentsia, and part of the petty bourgeoisie, were substantially affected by the new opportunities opened up by the reannexation of territories and by the enforcement of the second anti-Jewish Act. Our study did not envisage a detailed discussion of this widely ramifying problem, we only should like to emphasize some aspects that are important in respect of our subject. By the autumn of 1939, the economic and political "incorporation" of the Slovakian and Carpatho-Ukrainian territories was started with great zeal; so was the enforcement of the second anti-Jewish Act. The struggle for political, administrative, and — principally — economic positions, for an economic takeover, touched off in this way became the draining channel for the discontent and "oppositionism" of the higher middle class, of the non-Jewish strata of clerks and intelligentsia.

Parallel with this process, remarkable changes were taking place in those gentroid, genteel middle-class, civil-servant, etc. groups which constituted

⁶ For the economic history of this period, see BEREND T. IVÁN-RÁNKI GYÖRGY: *Magyarország gyáripara a második világháború előtt és a háború időszakában (1933–1944)* [Hungary's Manufacturing Industries before World War II and during the war period (1933–1944)], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1958, p. 624. The data referred to here are taken from this book.

the primary basis of the extreme rightist politics in Hungary. True to their traditions, these strata had been of predominantly landownerish-agrarian character and leanings up to then — but now they were realizing increasingly the many advantages of being admitted to the circles of industrial and commercial capitalists. A particular, new-bourgeois stratum began to emerge as a result, and was becoming more and more tone-setting within the gentlemanlike right and extreme right wing, which owed its novel economic opportunities entirely to the “achievements” of extreme rightist policies, to anti-Semitism, to militarism, to “territorial aggrandizement” and the like. It became, however, evident very soon that the opportunities to ascend to the top, to the strongholds of banking and industrial big capital, were rather scanty for them (stock-holdings were not affected by the anti-Jewish legislation for instance); but the contest for occupying economic positions opening on the medium and lower levels was going on with increasing dash.⁷

This “takeover” comprised economic positions that were of rather dubious “value” in practice. It meant the financial supervision of abandoned settlers’ holdings in occupied Slovak territories, of expropriated Jewish estates, the civil control of industrial establishments in Slovakia, positions resulting from the revision of trade licences, from the “Aryanization” of wholesale trade, from the reorganization of the boards of trade-associations, posts resulting from the redistribution of the offices of industrial managers, from the “Aryanization” of the chambers of various intellectual professions, and the like. The common feature of all these was that they were connected, directly or indirectly, with the increasing economic role of the State, of the administrative machinery. The principal beneficiaries were the top layer of the state apparatus, the politicians of the government party, and all those who maintained close relations with these. Yet a further phenomenon, affecting the political attitude of the extreme rightist gentry class considerably, emerged from all this. The strata interested in the “takeover”, in the occupation of the new positions began to realize that in lack of adequate relations with the top aristocratic-big capitalist circles, or with the government, they were able to get access to no more than the morsels of the economic spoil.

Thus while the economic upswing reduced the efficiency of the social demagoguery of the Arrow-Cross Party, and led to an increasing passivity in the circles of their proletarian, semi-proletarian followers, the consequences of the economic “takeover”, of the “territorial aggrandizement” had a decomposing effect on the higher strata of the middle class. The latter deemed it less

⁷ See RÉVAI JÓZSEF (under the nom de plume KÉSMÁRKI ENDRE): *Órségváltás* [Takeover]. Uj Hang, February 2, 1940.

important to rely on the extreme reactionary mass movement of the petty bourgeoisie and the backward proletarian layers. Instead, they were becoming divided more and more; in their circles the “oppositionist” political activities became increasingly compatible with the “struggle” — presented as the “great national cause” as before — for getting hold of the new positions, for securing “respectable” political and business supporters for themselves, and for giving proof of their loyalty to the Horthy regime at the same time. Thus a flow in the opposite direction began in the strata of the higher middle class that had joined the arrow-cross movement, or was oriented proper towards the drawing-room national socialist factions, and towards the right wing of the government party.

As we have seen, the decline of the impact and influence of the arrow-cross movement under the combined effect of several factors was more and more manifest by autumn 1939; there were continuous failures at elections, discontent in the nationalist-racist groups which had been sympathizing with the arrow-cross before, and the falling back of arrow-cross party life.

The general situation in Hungary’s home and foreign policy, the consolidation of the Teleki Government, the decrease in the strength and influence of the arrow-cross movement, the political blunders of the arrow-cross party leaders — such as the boycotting of Parliament by the arrow-cross deputies in the autumn of 1939 — made the differences within the party acute once more. A dual opposition emerged to counter Hubay and the leading group. The leaders were pressed from “below” by the activists — released from internment camps meanwhile and remaining party members or resigning from the party — demanding a more “radical” policy, the restoration of the “old” spirit, the “return” to Szálasi’s ideas. Géza Kiss, the national attorney of the party, the man of confidence of the “old” Hungarists and one of Hubay’s adversaries, wrote a long letter to Sándor Csia in October 1939. He complained that he had received a number of reports for five to six months that in the “recent composition of the party” the “old guard” is being neglected in both work and appreciation. He recommended to propagate Szálasi’s ideology for “restoring the party’s old, powerful dynamism” (such propagation has been “forgotten about” completely by Hubay and his men, he wrote), to give emphasis to the Szálasi cult which had been “neglected” and become an “arbitrary ceremony”, to pay more respect to the old activists, and to protect the party from “opportunists”.⁸

⁸ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll I. Letter of the National Attorney of the Arrow-Cross Party to Sándor Csia, October 2, 1939.

One principal directing focus of the "radicals" was the Hungarist centre in Vienna. Escaped activists were active there, calling themselves the "Szálasi Guard" since the summer of 1939; upon their initiative, an extensive conspiracy was started against Hubay and his group.⁹ They made attempts at organizing the "Szálasi Guard" also in Hungary;¹⁰ in their illegal leaflets, printed for the most part in Germany, they called upon their followers to counter Hubay's "legal" policy and to overthrow the "regime"¹¹: In autumn 1939, they created an illegal organization, calling it "Idea-protective Group", whose aim was to restore the party's "revolutionary" line and to bring under control, or punishing arbitrarily if need be, those leading persons who had departed from the "right" way, or had become "traitors".¹² These "radical" groups maintained relations with some of the party leaders — Emil Kovarcz, Lajos Gruber — who held that it was in the interest of the party's mass relations not to abandon altogether the "radical" methods.¹³

At the top, on the other hand, within the leading group of the party, within the parliamentary faction first of all, the differences grew deeper just from the opposite side. The number of deputies, accusing Hubay's leadership of "radicalism", was growing. They accused him of employing too sharp tactics unnecessarily, of "irresponsibility". The failure of parliamentary passivity, the series of electoral defeats, the detection of further illegal arrow-cross conspiracies, and the like, led to a situation that culminated in the outbreak in November and December of what might be called practically a court revolution. Part of the arrow-cross deputies held Hubay responsible for the series of failures. At the end of November, after the defeat in the Balatonfüred election, nine deputies led by Tibor Kórody demanded in writing Hubay's resignation, to give up parliamentary passivity, to put an end to dictatorial party control, to change political tactics.¹⁴ On November 29, after a heated debate, the parliamentary faction voted down the opposition demanding a "more intelligent leadership", but four deputies — Ferenz Zimmer, János Halmai, Andor Nyireő and Kálmán Rác — did not change their view and withdrew from the party.¹⁵ In a letter written to his constituents, Andor Nyireő gave the following reasons for his resignation: "National socialism is not supposed to throw overboard overnight the system followed so far . . . The Hungarian spirit is an individualistic one, clings to freedom,

⁹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 54, 55.

¹² SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 47. *Népszava*, January 4, 1940.

¹³ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 50, 53, 54, 58.

¹⁴ *Népszava*, November 30, 1939.

¹⁵ Bm.Nb. Trial of Kálmán Hubay before the People's Tribunal, p. 14. SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 57. *Népszava*, December 17, 1939.

and has a deep-rooted respect for our constitutionalism of thousand years. It is not prohibited leaflets . . . and street demonstrations that are necessary for gaining victory."¹⁶ Later on, Tibor Kórody explained his resignation from the party crudely, without any phrases referring to the "Hungarian spirit", saying: as an arrow-cross deputy, his lawyer's office, his practice, had been very poor; when he abandoned the arrow-cross movement, and joined the "more serious" group of the genteel extreme right, his lawyer's office began to boom, and he made a fortune.

Simultaneously with these resignations, Hubay and his group took steps against the radical groups of the old Hungarists. Also in December, they expelled from the party a number of the "most respectable" (i.e. most notorious) activists. This is what Hubay in his dilemma said about the party crisis on the eve of the new year: "We had to get rid of those who as party members showed Marxist dispositions, and we had to take care at the same time not to have people within the ranks of our party who are afraid of fighting and who represent that lukewarm, nightcapped bourgeois attitude in the bad sense."¹⁷

The differences between the Arrow-Cross Party and the other national socialist groups, too, were deepening. The decline of autumn 1939 and spring 1940 was affecting also these smaller groups; and their deputies believed that the principal factor in their decay was the "exaggerating", "irresponsible" policy of the Arrow-Cross Party. Having adopted a parlour-arrow-cross attitude, they attacked the Arrow-Cross Party substantially along the same line as the resigned, dissatisfied deputies of that party. Zoltán Meskó and his group in Parliament accused Hubay and his people of the unauthorized monopolization of the arrow-cross.¹⁸ In a vehement press campaign, the National Front raised outcries against the "adventurer" policy of the arrow-cross people, and against their demagogy that was still too sharp for the ears of the drawing-room arrow-cross factions.¹⁹ The Pálffy-Matolcsy-Baky group tried to distance itself from the Arrow-Cross Party, disapproved of the parliamentary activity and the anti-land-reform attitude of Hubay and his group, and criticized them for acting "to please the alleged mass sentiment of the moment".²⁰

The anti-arrow-cross, democratic or conservative public saw the signs of the decline and disintegration of the arrow-cross movement with great relief.

¹⁶ Uj Hang, as cited.

¹⁷ *Magyarság*, January 3, 1940. SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 59.

¹⁸ *Népszava*, December 2, 1939.

¹⁹ *Magyar Ujság*, November 27, 1939.

²⁰ A nyilas egység-tárgyalások okmányai [Documents of the coalition negotiations of the arrow-cross movement] Budapest, 1940, p. 34.

The Teleki Government, strengthened in self-confidence and influence, took stricter measures against the arrow-cross and the national socialists — laying bare further illegal conspiracies, arrow-cross embezzlements and blackmailings,²¹ unseating several national socialist deputies, etc. — all of which were accepted with general satisfaction. These steps also added to the decline of the arrow-cross movement, especially among its followers in the higher middle class.

It was in this way that late in 1939 and in the first months of 1940 Teleki succeeded in establishing domestic “public order” and a state of quietude. The economic situation showed an upward trend, the arrow-cross menace was subsiding, the democratic and left-wing opposition was weak, powerless — it seemed as though in wartime Europe Hungary were an island of “quietude” and “prosperity”. In January, February and March there was hardly any remarkable event in the arrow-cross movement. A few arrow-cross and national-socialist interpellations in Parliament, insignificant and largely unnoticed; detection of one or two secret arrow-cross conspiracies; a wreath-laying ceremony in the Place of Heroes; financial scandals, or “affairs of honour” of arrow-cross leaders.²² — The events showed that the movement was surrounded by growing disinterestedness. The *Völkischer Beobachter* published in a down-hearted manner a report on the situation by its Budapest correspondent: “Short-sighted tactics in Parliament, the absence of the unity in the political platform, the lack of personal discipline, severe defeats at elections, as well as the employment of inadequate manoeuvres against a government that is aware of its power, have led to the complete disintegration of internal cohesion, and — it would seem — to the definite paralysis of the political hitting-power of this group . . . After the recent resignations from the Hubay group, there are not less than eight extreme leftist groups in Parliament and it would seem that their activities at present consist of nothing else but personal controversies of prestige, and confusion and resulting stagnation toward the outside.”²³

It was probably due to the criticism and displeasure of the leading German circles that early in 1940 negotiations on a coalition of the Arrow-Cross Party and the Hungarian National Socialist Party of Pálffy-Matolcsy-Baky were started.²⁴ These talks lasted till May. The memorandum prepared by the Pálffy-Matolcsy group about the conditions of coalition repeated the accusations against Hubay voiced since autumn 1939, saying that the activities

²¹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 49, 61, 63.

²² SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 62–63.

²³ Cited by *Népszava*, January 13, 1940.

²⁴ Documents of the arrow-cross coalition negotiations, p. 6.

of the arrow-cross deputies within and outside Parliament were irresponsible (“The land reform issue was discussed in the absence of the arrow-cross deputies; did they perhaps not wish to take part? Or did they believe in connection with the events in Poland that they could assume power and were preparing for this? Or maybe they tried to overthrow the government, which they could not do? . . .”) They did not agree with the arrow-cross people in the question of land reform, nor in the manner of assuming power (“We stand absolutely on a constitutional basis . . . it is exactly therefore that we reject, and do not tolerate within our party, such methods as lead to imprisonment, internment, police surveillance and penal servitude at present). They did not agree with the arrow-cross method that tried to ruin morally the representatives of the existing regime. (Pálffy’s party “does not attack the persons of the regime, since these may be just as good Hungarians as we are, or perhaps even better ones . . . And we must not forget that old national socialists, just as good ones as we are, are to be found also within the government party, they only disagree with the methods employed so far.”) Finally Pálffy and Matolcsy declared that they were willing to enter a coalition only if the Arrow-Cross Party modifies its policy (“The former and possibly still existing black lines of the Arrow-Cross Party must be eliminated unconditionally and completely), if a leading group of a different composition would be appointed, if the party would change its name, and move the headquarters from 60 Andrassy Street to some other place. It goes without saying that these conditions of a coalition were unacceptable for Hubay and his men; so the negotiations were discontinued without any result in May 1940.”²⁵

A TRANSITORY UPSWING IN SUMMER AND AUTUMN OF 1940

The end of spring 1940 marked the beginning of a new period in world politics, in the conduct of war, and, consequently, in the history of the Teleki Government. Germany gains prompt, blitzkrieg victories in Northern Europe, overruns Belgium, Holland and France in a few weeks, and prepares for the invasion of England. It seemed as if Nazi Germany was marching towards victory irresistibly.

But the German leading circles realized soon that the invasion of the English coast was an irrational plan from the military point of view. In spring 1940 Germany therefore turned towards the East, and the first plans for preparing a military expedition against the Soviet Union were drawn up. To this end Germany modified its policy in South-eastern Europe: it placed Roumania under military control, and to

²⁵ Documents of the arrow-cross coalition negotiations, pp. 30–37.

secure its system of Southeast European alliances, cleared the way for the partial gratification of Hungarian and Bulgarian territorial claims against Roumania.²⁶ In June 1940 Italy entered the war at the side of Germany; this meant the final shattering of hopes placed in the Italian "counterweight" against Germany — hopes that had become more and more illusory for some years anyway. At the end of August, in such circumstances Transylvania was enclosed to Hungary as a result of the Second Vienna Award. And the price of this further "territorial aggrandizement" was to give up completely Teleki's conceptions of home and foreign policy. The German encirclement became complete.

By granting passage to the German troops, the Hungarian government co-operated in Roumania's occupation; further German economic demands were granted; for a consideration of the Vienna Award, the "Minorities Agreement between the Hungarian and German Governments" was signed, which recognized the Volksbund as the sole organization of the population of German stock in Hungary, and vested it with special authority.

The summer of 1940 was the end of those few months of "quietude" in Hungary's home and foreign policy which Teleki had always mentioned so proudly as his special accomplishment. The attitude of the German leading circles also changed in respect of Hungary. By that time, there was more at stake than to urge the compliance with the various German economic requests. German aspirations were gradually taking shape in order to create proper political conditions for the thorough economic exploitation of the countries of Southeastern Europe, including Hungary, to turn them into bases of military operations, to utilize their war potential for the sake of serving the purposes of an anti-Soviet war under preparation. To this end Germany not only employed the means of diplomatic pressure in a more powerful manner; it also lined up once more the various groups of the extreme right wing in Hungary. The underlying idea was to force upon Hungary an extreme rightist government in case Teleki would not be willing to serve German interests unconditionally.

Under the effect of Germany's military success in Northern Europe, the various groups of the extreme right wing in Hungary were ready to spring into activity once more without any special stimulus from Germany. The general staff, as well as a number of high-ranking army officers, began to direct a barrage against Teleki's policy of "neutralism". The right wing of the government party showed its colours again, fortified by the deputies of the Felvidéki Magyar Párt (Hungarian Party of Northern Hungary) led by

²⁶ See JUHÁSZ GYULA: *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája 1939—1941* [Foreign Policy of the Teleki-Government 1939—1941] Budapest, 1965, p. 164.

Jaross, who joined the Party of Hungarian Life in spring 1940. This move was introduced by an article of Imrédy, published in the Easter issue of *Uj Magyarország*. Imrédy wrote of the necessity of the adaptation to the "idea of the age", of the unconditional support of Germany.²⁷ The success of the German offensive in the west shook even the conservative wing of the ruling circles; not even Teleki was able to shake off the impression. And all this uncertainty acted to increase further the self-confidence of the extreme right.

Imrédy and his followers and the various national socialist groups were drawing nearer one another. As early as April, the home politics columnist of *Népszava* warned that the dividing line between the right wing of the Party of Hungarian Life and the various green-shirted groups "begins to be blurred again".²⁸ On June 3, Jenő Rácz, former Minister of National Defence, one leading member of Imrédy's group, demanded that the imprisoned extreme rightist men should be treated "in the spirit of forgiveness", meaning Szálasi thereby, and urged co-operation with the arrow-cross people.²⁹ The statement of Jenő Rácz was the first serious attempt at bridging the old differences, going back to 1938, between Imrédy and the arrow-cross, at creating an alliance of the right wing of the government party and the arrow-cross groups. The urging of this alliance became an important pillar of the Hungarian policy of the leading German circles from that time on.

The first onslaught of the extreme right wing on the Teleki Government took place early June 1940. At the head of this action was the right wing of the government party led by Imrédy; the Arrow-Cross Party only played the second fiddle in this concerto, and was not even quite tuned in with Imrédy's faction. During the last days of May, Imrédy launched within the government party a massive campaign against Teleki; in the focus of his criticism was the government's "slackness", and its "liberal" composition that was at variance with the "spirit of the times".³⁰ On June 3, at the congress of the Party of Hungarian Life, the differences broke out in an open war, and it seemed as if a considerable proportion of the deputies of the government party supported Imrédy.³¹ The arrow-cross people attached great hopes to the deepening of the differences. There is no complete government crisis as yet — wrote *Pesti Ujság* — but if "there will be no change in the foreign policy of the government, it is likely to result in a more severe crisis".³²

²⁷ *Uj Magyarország*, March 24, 1940.

²⁸ *Népszava*, April 3, 1940.

²⁹ *Nemzetőr*, June 3, 1940.

³⁰ *Népszava*, June 1, 1940.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Pesti Ujság*, June 1, 1940.

The arrow-cross deputies did their best to intensify the crisis; in Parliament they urged to put on the agenda the question of confidence. On June 5, an interpellation day, they assembled with a flood of interpellations, attacked the home and foreign policy of the government with infuriated demagogy, demanded the release of imprisoned or interned arrow-cross men, the repeal of Government Decree 3400 that prohibited civil servants to join the arrow-cross parties.³³ On June 7, Kálmán Hubay and Pál Vágó introduced in the chamber of deputies their "Nationalities Bill".³⁴

According to the plans, this bill would have been an important base for the government. Yet this plan turned out badly — as so many of the arrow-cross political plans did — moreover it provided an opportunity to the hard-pressed Teleki to take action in the direction of the "least resistance" and by intensifying the battle against the arrow-cross movement to launch a counterattack against the extreme right wing.

According to the arrow-cross bill on "Self-government and Registration of Ethnic Groups Living in Hungary" the citizens whose mother tongue was Serbian, Croatian, German, Roumanian, Ruthenian and Slovak were to form "ethnic groups" besides the "ethnic family of Hungarians" and to keep regular records and registers of their members. The ethnic groups would be granted wide autonomy in public education, cultural activities, public welfare, as well as in the appointment of officials to administrative, police and judicial posts, and would delegate members to Parliament in accordance with their numerical proportion. Their organization of self-government would have the status of an "organization under constitutional law" headed by the person responsible for the ethnic group; the head of state would have no right to relieve such persons of their office. The "ethnic family of Hungarians" would play the leading role within the state organization as a matter of course.³⁵

It appeared from the draft of Hubay and Vágó that the former arrow-cross ideas about the policy towards the nationalities had clearly undergone a substantial change, that there was some "progress". Not even in his most daring hallucinations and wish-dreams did Szálasi go beyond the concept of a territorial autonomy, which was by no means closely defined, but emphasized the supremacy of the Hungarians in the sharpest terms: within the "Hungarist Empire" the territories inhabited by the nationalities would have been reduced to the role of "partial lands". The same idea appears — most

³³ Pesti Ujság, June 5, 1940.

³⁴ Ibid., June 7, 1940.

³⁵ For the Arrow-Cross Bill see OL, Képviselőház által kiküldött bizottságok jegyzőkönyvei [Minutes of the committees delegated by Parliament], Vol. XX.

laconically — in the platforms of the Hungarist, then Arrow-Cross Party. The draft of 1940 differs from these in two respects: one, there was a shift from the territorial "principle" to the racist "principle" (separate registration of ethnic groups, no assimilation whatsoever to one another); two, the "State idea of St. Stephen" was replaced by a more "up-to-date" Hungarian "imperial" idea that served the German interests much better.

The bill proved to be a bad blunder on the part of the arrow-cross people. By introducing their bill, they underestimated the power of Hungarian chauvinism, and this chauvinism came handy to be turned against them. Indeed, Teleki did not hesitate to grasp the opportunity. At the moment the arrow-cross bill was introduced, he launched a counterattack, accused Hubay and Vágó of high treason, and moved a proposal of incompatibility against them a few days later. The entire governmental machinery was set in motion by Teleki. Both the oppositionist and the government press launched a massive campaign, accusing the arrow-cross of stabbing the Hungarian nation in the back, of trying to disintegrate St. Stephen's empire.

The various "patriotic" organizations protested in masses against the arrow-cross bill. Under the effect of the inflamed chauvinistic public sentiment, two arrow-cross deputies withdrew from the Arrow-Cross Party. And the arrow-cross deputy Sándor Pröhle, a Lutheran minister, had to vacate his seat under instruction of his Church.³⁶ So the arrow-cross people were left to themselves. Imrédy and his group, engaged in attacking the regime, were thrown into confusion by the storm of indignation aroused by the bill, became dumfounded, and refused to back the bill as a matter of course. Pálffy's National Socialist Party declared in the press that they did not identify themselves with the proposal of Hubay and Vágó.³⁷

The arrow-cross leaders were surprised and scared to see what a big storm they had set off. As a counterbalance they organized on June 12 a mass demonstration of sympathy at the German and Italian embassies,³⁸ and attacked the government with further interpellations. Emil Kovarcz denounced Teleki's "anti-axis" policy, and Gábor Vajna, referring to the fact that the nationality problem had recently aroused much "excitement", demanded that Teleki introduce a "proper" nationality bill.³⁹ Yet all this was of no avail; the arrow-cross leaders tried in vain to shield themselves with Széchenyi's views before the incompatibility committee, insisted in vain on their faithfulness to "St. Stephen's idea". Teleki "won", and the committee

³⁶ N épszava, June 23, 1940.

³⁷ M agyarság, June 9, 1940.

³⁸ S OMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 65.

³⁹ The Journals, June 26, 1940.

of the Chamber of Deputies unseated Kálmán Hubay and Pál Vágó on July 22. The street demonstrations organized by the arrow-cross next day and the third day were broken up by the police, and several hundred quarrelsome arrow-cross men were arrested.⁴⁰

Yet there was a "small" weak point in Teleki's "success" again. Namely there were left to him only two "weapons" which he possibly could have deployed against the extreme right wing in June 1940: one was the promise of a possible third anti-Jewish law, the other a still more intense stirring of chauvinism.

In summer 1940, as the parliamentary controversies became sharper, the illegal activities of the arrow-cross groups increased as well. The number of arrow-cross demonstrations grew, more and more illegal leaflets were distributed, and the like.⁴⁰ Led by Károly Wirth, a deputy urging a "radical" policy, head of the arrow-cross factory organizations, a wide secret conspiracy was started in July for preparing the capture of Miklós Horthy to make easier the "take-over" that might become timely soon. They planned to hold up Horthy at one of his trips to the country, to hold him captive and to compel him to appoint Szálasi Prime Minister; they planned to occupy at the same time the buildings of the radio, of the police and the ministries. The weapons required for carrying out the putsch were to be obtained from the arrow-cross employees of the arms factory. But the conspiracy was discovered in its initial stage by the police, and the people involved were arrested with the exception of Károly Wirth.⁴² On August 11 the government issued a decree on the extension of summary jurisdiction, according to which high treason, espionage and sedition, as well as conspiracy and abatement for such purposes, were subject to summary procedure.⁴³ But the preparations for the arrow-cross putsch proper were not made public for several months — until November 1940 — obviously for reasons of diplomacy; the motion to waive the parliamentary immunity of Károly Wirth was made by the Public Prosecutor's Office not before November 8.⁴⁴ There was a similar delay in making public the activities of the Railway Front, an illegal arrow-cross organization, detected some time after; this was led from behind the scene by Emil Kovarcz and intended to prepare the arrow-cross militants of the railway system for the case of a coup d'état.⁴⁵

The diplomatic reason for which the illegal activities were hushed up was

⁴⁰ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 66.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Miklós Horthy's Secret Papers, p. 225.

⁴³ Budapesti Közlöny [Budapest Official Gazette] August 11, 1940.

⁴⁴ Népszava, November 9, 1940.

⁴⁵ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 74.

the fact that the problem of the Transylvanian territorial revision was placed on the immediate agenda by the end of June; the Hungarian government, afraid of Germany's disapproval, dared not launch further public action against the arrow-cross movement in addition to the campaign against Hubay and Vágó.

By putting on the agenda the Transylvanian question, the struggles of home politics abated for some time only to break out even more intensely in autumn 1940, after the military occupation and annexation of Northern Transylvania had been carried out. Meanwhile the extreme right wing — clearly under direct instructions by the Gestapo and the SS — prepared for another attack. The German aim continued to be this: to keep Teleki under pressure as forcefully as possible, and, in case he refused definitely to yield to German demands, to effect his dismissal and to replace him by an extreme rightist government.

These preparations were greatly promoted by those steps of home politics which Teleki had promised to take as a return-service for Northern Transylvania. The Hungaro-German Minority Agreement mentioned above gave full discretion to the Volksbund to be active in Hungary as a state within the state. On the occasion of the "return" of Northern Transylvania, the Regent proclaimed a general pardon, as a result of which most of the imprisoned or interned arrow-cross men were released; even Szálasi was pardoned. Szálasi was discharged from Szeged Prison on September 16; on September 22 he appeared at the 5th district premises of the Arrow-Cross Party, took out an identity card as a "textile worker" and entered ceremoniously the House of Faith. Late in September the government withdrew Decree 3400 issued in summer 1938.

The German intentions were aimed at the unification of the split-up Hungarian extreme right wing, and at increasing its striking-power thereby. The first step to this end was to urge the creation of arrow-cross unity. The German masters of the Hungarian extreme right wing attached great hopes to the recently released Szálasi for accomplishing such unity. The leaders of Pálffy's National Socialist Party and the editorial board of *Magyarság*, a daily of the arrow-cross movement, presented themselves as the initiators of moving towards unity; most of the arrow-cross leaders had become secret agents of the German intelligence service by that time.

Upon the instructions by Ferenc Rothen, the person "responsible" for the Hungarian intelligence centre of the German Foreign Office, in August 1940, László Baký contacted Jenő Ruskay, a retired lieutenant general, and invited him to join the leadership of the Hungarian National Socialist Party. Ruskay was a "noted" personality of the counterrevolution of 1919, an old

right-hand man of the Germans.⁴⁶ "We expected that Ruskay's person would have great appeal" — said Baky in court in 1945 — "and indeed four or five members of Parliament joined our party after his appearance on the scene . . . What we expected was that Ruskay would bridge the gulf between our party and the Arrow-Cross Party." The design was that "after Szálasi's release we would succeed by calling in Ruskay to establish a common platform of the extreme right-wing parties under the leadership of Szálasi . . ."⁴⁷

In September Ruskay wrote a letter to Szálasi in which he stated his political views. "The government cannot but take into account beyond any doubt that the new world order is coming . . . the possibility is now given to proceed without graver consequences", he wrote. He saw two prerequisites of success: a close rallying of national socialist forces under the leadership of Szálasi, as well as "serious work in the spirit of appeasement (not in the spirit of compromise) that would make possible for the men of the old regime a 'Rückzug in Ehren' (honourable withdrawal) and would also lead to a period of transition (à la Hindenburg — Hugenberg — Hitler) which would give enough time as well as the way for a complete preparation (these conditions were not yet given) . . . To realize all this it is necessary, first of all, to clarify your personal position towards the Regent and the highest instances, and this has become possible by now in my opinion". Ruskay emphasized that he would be at Szálasi's service in this "clarification" and that "my humble political withdrawal during your absence only served these lofty ends". By way of conclusion Ruskay declared that "to bring to completion this entire evolutional process independent of interference from abroad there are left to us not more than 4 to 5 months".⁴⁸

Judging from this letter and from the attitude of the arrow-cross leaders, Ruskay and his men had information from Germany — certainly not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but rather from the SS with which they maintained contacts through László Baky, Olivér Rupperecht, etc. — that certain German circles were willing to assist the unified arrow-cross movement in coming into power — or to keep it in reserve for this purpose at least — forming a coalition with the extreme right wing of the government party in due time.⁴⁹ The feasibility of this scheme was supported in the eyes of the

⁴⁶ Bm.Nb. Trial of László Endre and accomplices before the People's Tribunal. Evidence given by László Baky. Vol. II.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 2. Jenő Ruskay's letter of September 9, 1940, written to Szálasi. Thus the letter was dated prior to Szálasi's release from prison.

⁴⁹ Immediately after his release from prison, Szálasi met Adolf Michaelis, a German agent. In the course of their talk, Michaelis "was shocked" at Szálasi's unreal assessment of the situation. Some time later Michaelis was ordered to go to Berlin from where he brought Ferenc Rothen's written message to Szálasi. The message said that consid-

arrow-cross men by the events in Roumania; it was exactly at that time, at the peak of the crisis in that country, that Antonescu's fascist military dictatorship assumed power, forming an alliance with the Iron Guard, the Roumanian fascist mass movement, and that Horia Sima, the leader of the Iron Guard, was made Prime Minister in Antonescu's government. It was evidently the German encouragement — and the Roumanian example — that led Pálffy and the other national socialist groups to unite with the arrow-cross movement without delay. The leaders of the Hungarian National Socialist Party — Fidél Pálffy, Mátyás Matolcsy, László Baky — who some months before had refused to join forces with Hubay raising a number of "principled" objections, were busy in announcing that they were ready for unification. The talks lasted but a few days, and it suddenly appeared that there were no such things as differences of "principle" and that even the fact that Szálasi claimed the omnipotential leadership of the "unified" movement for himself raised no special difficulty.

The platform of the unified movement was made public on October 1st; the Arrow-Cross Party was recognized as the sole depositary of national socialism in Hungary, and Szálasi its leader, enjoying full powers. "The embodiment of a common will, common responsibility, is Brother Szálasi, the Leading Brother." Besides the "leading brother" the chief leaders of the movement — except for Ruskay — emerged from within the Arrow-Cross Party.⁵⁰ The arrow-cross "brotherly feeling" was virtually complete. All who had intrigued and conspired against one another made peace, the dissident deputies — except for the one Kálmán Rác — rejoined the party after doing official penance, and the "leading brother" declared majestically "Ferenc Szálasi forgives you".⁵¹ László Baky, one of the principal informers of the German intelligence service in Hungary, who went over to Pálffy's party in the spring of 1939 and played an important role in preparing unification, became once more an enthusiastic follower of Szálasi for a few months. The Arrow-Cross Party increased in this way had more than forty seats in Parliament.

Szálasi probably never felt so close to the realization of his maniacal designs as in those weeks after his release. On October 7, he held a festive in-

ering the delicate situation in Southeast Europe "it would be better if Szálasi would abstain from mentioning again and again St. Stephen's Empire" since this affects adversely Germany's relations with the nationalities of Hungary. If Szálasi was willing to accept the principle of "ethnic groups", Rothen would give him full support (C. A. MACARTNEY: October Fifteenth, a history of Modern Hungary, 1929—1945. Edinburgh, 1965, Vol. I, p. 434.) So early in autumn 1940, Rothen — as well as the SS and the Nazi party people backing him — were confident that they could persuade Szálasi to accept their conceptions.

⁵⁰ Magyarország, October 1, 1940.

⁵¹ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 69.

auguration speech in the House of Faith. He thanked Horthy for the pardon, and declared that he was fighting for the possession of such a power as Mussolini enjoyed. He thanked Hubay who "with unswerving consistency of principle and with firm steadfastness kept the vow we took to each other in March 1938, at the tomb of the late Gyula Gömbös". He thanked Jenő Ruzsák for "having realized national socialist unity". In the following he presented his programme, the principal headlines of which were as follows: Our aim is to take over power. The unity of nationalism and socialism. We are a peasant state. Complete absence of Jews. The relation of the party to the government: no compromise whatsoever. There is no change of regime without a revolution. Churches engaging in politics will not be tolerated. We must integrate ourselves with the reorganized Europe.

Szálasi's old or convert followers were scared by his words. The indications were that a released Szálasi went far beyond his mania and confusion well known before his imprisonment; most of his speech was made up of nonsensical and incomprehensible constructions, of cloudy, mystical sentences. The anti-arrow-cross press cited Szálasi's notional and stylistic "bull's eye hits" for weeks, while the arrow-cross press took pains to cite of the leader's "principled" expositions as little as possible.

Yet, for the time being, the arrow-cross leaders were too busy to reflect upon Szálasi's inflated self-consciousness as a leader, upon his megalomania and his "language reformism". In the first half of October, an extreme rightist attack, on a considerably larger scale than the one in June, was launched against the Teleki Government. The internal differences of the government party grew once more. Imrédy and his group, whose resignation had been requested by Teleki several times since the summer of 1940, had to reach a decision: during the first days of October, Imrédy and his closest followers — 16 deputies up to the end of that month — withdrew from the government party.⁵² In their declaration of withdrawal, Imrédy and Jaross accused Teleki of having abandoned rightist foreign and home politics, of having given up to realize the election platform of 1939.⁵³

The arrow-cross movement was leading the political battles of October. Their hopes were supported by a number of phenomena. Early in October, Roumania was practically under German military occupation, and Hungary became the transit area of the German troops. A split took place within the government party, and nobody knew by then to what dimensions it was likely to grow. The arrow-cross unity was realized by then; the arrow-cross general staff saw an opportunity for precipitating a profound government

⁵² Magyarország, October 4, 1940; DEZSŐ SALY, op. cit. p. 249.

⁵³ Magyarország, October 4, 1940.

crisis, for provoking a more direct interference of the Germans, and perhaps for a national socialist "take-over" with German help, or for paving the way to power at least. But to accomplish this, a revived demagogy in Parliament was not sufficient, some kind of large-scale mass movement seemed desirable. So they decided to assign this role to the miners.

The first signs of arrow-cross plans to mobilize the miners appeared as early as August 1940. A "miners' congress" was convened to the Arrow-Cross Party centre for September 1; this conference was hushed up even before most of the party leaders.⁵⁴ The arrow-cross miners' delegates agreed in a 30 per cent rise of wages as the principal demand. Through police information, the government naturally knew about this arrow-cross activity; and to take out the wind of the miners' and — generally speaking — the workers' dissatisfaction, the government issued a decree on a 7 per cent raise of wages on October 1st. The announcement of such a wage-rise, amounting to practically nothing, only increased the discontent of the miners. The arrow-cross leaders, headed by Lajos Gruber who had been put in charge of directing the miners' movement, thought that the hour to act had come: on October 8, the miners of the Frigyes pit of Salgótarján went on strike.⁵⁵ The effect of these first stoppages was tremendous, the strike movement was spreading like wildfire. By October 14 the strike had extended to the mines of Dorog, Tokod, Tatabánya; by October 16 to the entire coal-basin of Pécs, a number of minor pits, and to a number of industrial plants of the mining districts. About 40 000 miners were out on strike in the middle of that month all over the country. Doubtless, this strike was the greatest agitation for higher wages in the second half of the thirties and the war years. And since its "organization" was provided solely by the arrow-cross movement, it was marked by a practically complete lack of political consciousness.

The arrow-cross leaders cynically played a double game with the miners on strike. During the first days they behaved with extreme demagogy in Parliament,⁵⁶ but denied in public to have to do anything with setting off the strike. Some days later they even denied having supported or approved of the strike. To each other, they revealed their political plans: a situation must

⁵⁴ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial. Roll 2. Pártvezetőségi ülések jegyzőkönyvei [Minutes of the Party Committee meetings]. Session of September 3, 1940.

⁵⁵ See Hadtörténelmi Intézet Levéltára. Vezérkari Főnökség iratai. [Archives of the Institute for War History. Papers of the Chief of General Staff]. Hereinafter HL VKF. 1940. Eln. I. o. files 4890–4934.

⁵⁶ In his interpellation of October 9, Lajos Gruber said among others: "I warn the Government at the eleventh hour that this question must not be regarded as a police problem . . . The Government is warned that the 8000 Hungarian workers went on strike because of starvation, and if no urgent measures are taken, 65 000 Hungarian miners will stop working since they are compelled to go on strike." The Journals, October 9, 1940.

be created, they said, in which the government would not be able to get under control the political chaos at home, and would be compelled therefore — obviously learning from the Roumanian example — to call in the Germans. And among the miners they spread the rumour that they should resist until October 20th, as the Germans would start to occupy Hungary on that day.⁵⁷

The government and the ruling circles were overcome by fear. A complete news-ban was imposed on the events of the strike; up to mid-November, the newspapers were not permitted to write as much as a line about them. The mining districts were occupied by strong military units, but the mass arrests, callings up, and other drastic measures for breaking down the strike proved to be altogether futile for a while. Horthy's letter of October 14, written to Teleki, was characteristic of the situation; it appears from this letter that Horthy himself considered the arrow-cross peril to be grave in autumn 1940. The arrow-cross people — he wrote — “just like the Iron Guard try in their deranged state of mind to deliver the country into the hands of the Germans”. “Practically everything is now in the hands of people who sympathize with the arrow cross, and something must be done to change this;” he then listed the institutions whose leaders were arrow-cross men or their fellow-travellers, and continued: “The stirring up of the strike is the work of the arrow cross beyond any doubt, and the seditious arrow-cross men must be crushed, or else there will be bad mischief . . .” “It appears from available evidence that Wirth wanted to kill me . . . but that he was not even arrested upon such evidence is somewhat too much of an easy-going attitude. I do not see any other way out than to warn the arrow-cross leaders that if they try to overthrow the situation the party will be prohibited and the leaders shot . . . drastic steps must be introduced by summary jurisdiction and by making extensive use of the entire press. If Szálasi is the driving force, he must go back to the prison in Szeged.” And, finally: “I do not trust anybody more than you . . . and we must not be beaten.”⁵⁸ Whether Horthy actually sent this letter to Teleki is not known; but the fact remains that, for the time being at least, no serious step whatsoever was taken against the arrow-cross movement.

The spirit of the strike was not broken before October 20. The government cleverly coupled terror with holding out the promises of a number of concessions. The arrow-cross “deadline” expired, no German troops were com-

⁵⁷ See SZEKERES JÓZSEF: *Az 1940. évi általános bányász-sztrájk története* [History of the 1940 general strike of the miners] Századok 1967. №. 1–2, pp. 82–137. and DEZSŐ SALY, op. cit. 271, pp. 263–264.

⁵⁸ Miklós Horthy's Secret Papers, pp. 262–264. Miklós Horthy's letter to Pál Teleki on October 14, 1940.

ing. And the strike did not spread to other branches, the arrow-cross men did not succeed in persuading other strata of workers.

After October 20, there was a sharp turn also in the attitude of the arrow-cross leaders: they did not any more identify themselves with the strike of the miners. Gruber angrily refused to accept any claim of the miners' delegation for the support of his party. As rumours had it, on October 26 Szálasi declared before a delegation of miners that he was not willing to back the strike, and that the national socialists had available “other means” to accomplish their objectives.⁵⁹

This volte-face took place on German instructions, in all probability. The German government was increasingly dissatisfied with the foreign information service of the Teleki Government in which there was much talk about the imperilment of public order at home, of the harmful effects of the strike on Hungary's economic life, especially on railway transports.⁶⁰

In those weeks, German leading circles had an increasing number of rather annoying news about the turmoil spreading in Roumania, about the “independent” actions of the Iron Guard that endangered Antonescu's efforts at “consolidation”. It would have been diametrically opposed to German interests if an economic and political turmoil would have arisen in another “allied” country after Roumania. So the Germans said hush to their arrow-cross adherents. In November, after the strike had been liquidated altogether, the arrow-cross leaders went as far as accusing the Social Democratic Party of having set off the strike.⁶¹

After stubborn and embittered rear-guard fighting, the strike was defeated everywhere by the first days of November. The miners, left altogether by themselves by that time, had no choice but to accept conditions. Yet there was something they had fought out beyond any doubt: a 12 per cent raise of wages, some other benefits, and, last but not least, that the subsequent retaliation of the ruling circles remained largely absent on this particular occasion. On the other hand, at the other side of the balance was the fact that the miners had lent themselves — if only unconsciously and for a while — as a means for the ultrareactionary political adventure of the arrow-cross leaders. True, in the last phase and after the strike the miners lost faith in the arrow-cross movement very soon.

⁵⁹ SZEKERES, JÓZSEF, op. cit.

⁶⁰ The government information that there was a rapid decrease in the coal reserves of the Hungarian State Railways was especially alarming for the Germans. The transport of German war material and troops towards Roumania was going on on a large scale at that time; the German government was afraid of a breakdown in railway transports.

⁶¹ The Journals, November 7, 1940.

The defeat and thwarting of the miners' strike marked the end of the large-scale arrow-cross attack in autumn 1940, and proved to be a turning-point in the history of the arrow-cross movement at the same time.

The failure of the arrow-cross campaign late in 1940, Teleki's more drastic measures against the movement were again the result of several considerations of foreign and home policy. The most decisive of these was the attitude of the leading German circles. In autumn 1940, this attitude was influenced especially by two circumstances. One was the German experience with the policy of the Hungarian government. Namely they learned that the Teleki Government not only stood by the agreements of the Vienna Award, but was even ready to comply with further German demands. The Hungaro-German economic negotiations in autumn 1940 were completed to the full satisfaction of the Germans. Hungary was actually turned into the military transit area of the Germans. In November 1940, Hungary was the first to join the three-power pact of the fascist states, of Germany, Italy and Japan. By this step Hungary's neutrality ceased also formally, and the country became member of the fascist powers' military alliance. All this convinced Germany that there was no need for insisting on an extreme right turn-about, or on the intensification of an extreme rightist pressure in Hungary. So it was not by chance that Teleki's drastic measures against the arrow-cross coincided with Hungary's accession to the three-power pact.

Late in 1940 Hitler concluded in addition that a sudden turn towards the extreme right in which the arrow-cross people would play a leading role might involve serious dangers for the Germans. They learned this lesson mainly from the events in Roumania.

As we have mentioned, the German leading circles were increasingly "taken aback" by the activities of the Iron Guard, the fascist mass movement in Roumania. The Iron Guard was aiming at power, was not willing to acquiesce in the subordinate role it played in the Antonescu Government created with German intervention; their independent endeavours to assume power were marked by bloody terroristic acts, by ravages of the Iron Guard formations, and by an increasing disruption of public order. Not even the German "instructional formations", arriving in Roumania early October, were able to restore order; the differences between the Iron Guard and the government were growing sharper. The Iron Guard was convinced that the German occupants supported them and that, backed by them or with their active help, they would be able to assume full power. On November 27, 1940, the Iron Guard sparked off a large-scale putsch, and made an attempt at assuming power amid bloody massacres. The attempt was thwarted, but the warfare between the two trends of Roumanian fascism — Antonescu's

gentlemen-officers and the "radical" fascist mass movement of the Iron Guard — lasted several months, to culminate in January 1941 in another mass revolt and the final break between Antonescu and the Iron Guard. The German government supported Antonescu with all its might. The fascist revolts were finally brought under control only with the co-operation of the German troops.

These events in Roumania had a profound effect on Hungary: they widened the gulf between the government and the arrow-cross movement, and cautioned the Imrédyist or government-party factions of the genteel extreme right in respect of an alliance with the arrow-cross movement. And they had a similarly great effect also on the policy of the German government; they supported the view that the fascist mass movements of the Southeast European countries must be "handled with care", that these movements — whenever they are allowed to play an independent role — are dangerous for the Germans, and are unfit for entering agreements with the ruling circles, for creating a stable economic and political order. Yet all this was not to mean, of course, that the Germans should not have tried to exploit the "radical" fascist trends for their own purposes. But, even so, the German view that these mass movements must be mere means for exerting pressure on governments was confirmed definitely. Beginning from that time, the German ruling circles endeavoured even more emphatically to secure relations with the traditional ruling circles of the Southeast European countries, and to enforce their demands without causing a radical change in prevailing conditions of power. And if the necessity arose to enforce an extreme rightist change — because of the fickleness of these ruling circles —, to bring about such a change by using the more "moderate", more "able to govern" gentlemanlike-fascist groups for this purpose. It followed from this conception that the role of the fascist mass movements had to be reduced — besides serving as a pressure from "below" — to forming the mass base of a possibly desirable extreme rightist government, while its separate power aspirations had to be defeated.

On November 20, 1940, Teleki went to Vienna to sign the accession to the Three-Power Pact. While in Vienna, he was informed that the German government had no intention to assist the Iron Guard or the Arrow-Cross Party to assume power, and, moreover, that the German government was utterly dissatisfied with their activities. According to information by the Prime Minister's public relations office, Hitler raised no demands as concerned home politics in the course of the talks. The only thing the Germans considered important was that the government be stable in Hungary. "According to Thuránszky, Teleki would make some hints at taking certain more drastic meas-

ures to restore order at home as soon as the debate on the budget of the prime ministerial portfolio begins."⁶² Another information had it that "Hitler made an interesting statement in Vienna in the presence of Teleki, speaking of the situation in Roumania. 'I had bad experiences', Hitler allegedly said, 'with the national socialist leaders in Southeast Europe, it was not worth the trouble to experiment with them, I'll give it up now!' . . ."⁶³

It may be doubted, of course, whether Hitler had said this literally; but it is highly probable that he had expressed dissatisfaction in connection with the Iron Guard. The Roumanian "lesson" served as a warning example for the German government for years. The Germans were certainly aware of this when they favoured Imrédy and the extreme right wing of the government party, and urged the union of the arrow-cross with Imrédy's group — under the leadership of Imrédy, to be sure.

Another causative factor of the failure of the arrow-cross campaign in autumn 1940 was the attitude of Imrédy and his followers and of the "more serious" elements of the genteel extreme right in general. After withdrawing from the government party in mid-October, Imrédy and his followers decided to form a new party, the Party of Hungarian Renaissance.⁶⁴

Szálasi and his followers, striving for absolute power, were highly dissatisfied with Imrédy's independent national socialist move.⁶⁵ From the very beginning, they realized that the Party of Hungarian Renaissance was a dangerous rival in the struggle for winning the benevolence of the German leaders and the genteel middle class in Hungary. Some time later Szálasi said that "by forming his Party of Hungarian Renaissance Béla Imrédy disrupted the right-wing unity which represents the spirit of modern times. He disrupted the nation's clear conception of this question".⁶⁶ It is easy to see from all this why the atmosphere was rather icy when late in October 1940 Imrédy and Szálasi met for a "conference" and why the talks were discontinued without any agreement or result. These talks threw light not only on the profound personal differences that existed between the two leaders but also revealed the fact that Szálasi insisted on his role as the supreme leader.⁶⁷

⁶² SALY, DEZSŐ, *op. cit.* pp. 277–278.

⁶³ *Ibid.* pp. 279–280.

⁶⁴ *Magyarság*, October 20, 1940.

⁶⁵ *Népszava*, October 20, 1940.

⁶⁶ *Bm.Nb. Imrédy Béla népbírósi pere* [Trial of Béla Imrédy before the People's Tribunal], p. 448. Evidence given by Ferenc Szálasi.

⁶⁷ Based on a German news report, the Hungarian dailies reported on the "conference" of Imrédy and Szálasi on October 24 and 25 (*Pesti Ujság* October 24, 1940; *Népszava*, October 25, 1940; C. A. MACARTNEY, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 437).

Thus it happened in November 1940 that the independent attempts of the arrow-cross movement to assume power were shipwrecked. The temporary upswing of the movement, the increase of its political importance stopped dead; the process was reversed and there began a decline of an ever increasing rate that could never be stemmed again.

SZÁLASI "FALLING INTO DISGRACE". FURTHER DECLINE OF THE ARROW-CROSS MOVEMENT

What happened in November 1940 was not simply the fact that one of the arrow-cross actions aimed at assuming power, or coming near it, ended in a failure. The October campaign was the last serious political move of the arrow cross. What actually happened in autumn 1940 was that the conditions of the existence of the arrow-cross movement changed radically: Germany's attitude towards them was then decided for many years to come, practically until the summer of 1944; the irreconcilability of the differences existing between the arrow-cross movement and the Horthyist ruling circles had become a conclusively proved fact by then; and, finally, the "independent" appearance on the scene of Imrédy and his faction created a novel situation in the entire internal structure of the extreme right wing. During the rest of the Teleki Government's days there emerged those political fronts which determined the position of the extreme right wing for a number of years, up to the spring of 1944.

For the arrow-cross movement, these months marked their withdrawal, defensive rear-guard actions, inactivity and increasing impotence. It was evident that the government had been given a free hand to press back the arrow cross that acted too "boldly" in the autumn of 1940. The trial of the Railway Front, a secret arrow-cross conspiracy, was opened early January, 1941.⁶⁸ At the end of January, the High Court of Justice sentenced Károly Wirth to 15 years of penal servitude; Emil Kovarcz was sentenced to two years of imprisonment by the Supreme Military Court in February.⁶⁹ In April Kovarcz was sentenced to further five years, but he had meanwhile made his escape to Germany.⁷⁰ In March, more severe sentences were imposed on the members of the "group for defending the ideology" which had been detected earlier, and Lajos Gruber, who had been sentenced to one year prison, was arrested.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Népszava* January 6, 1941.

⁶⁹ *Népszava* February 1 and March 1, 1941.

⁷⁰ *Népszava* May 3, 1941.

⁷¹ *Népszava* March 21, 1941.

The arrow-cross leaders were beating the retreat everywhere. They restrained their parliamentary demagoguery once more, and their interpellations, kept in a much more careful tone, were dealing mainly with their grievances instead of the question of "big politics", with trying to explain their conduct of autumn 1940, or with insignificant side issues. The practically sole subject of the arrow-cross press at that time was anti-Semitism, and the defamation of democratic and socialist forces, of the "Anglo-Saxons". Yet in this respect their vulgar demagogism was worse than ever before. The role of the "prestigious" oppositionist critic in Parliament was assumed by Imrédy and his group, behaving more "moderately" and cleverly, but no less dangerously than the arrow-cross people did. The arrow-cross deputies were fascinated by Imrédy's speeches "of vision" which were doubtless of higher standards than those of the arrow-cross people used to be; their admiration was only restrained by the awareness that Szálasi was utterly disapproving the manifestations of the extreme rightist cult that began to take shape round the person of Imrédy.

The justification of right-wing criticism directed against the government began to vanish anyway. After Hungary's accession to the Three-Power Pact, the relations between the Teleki Government and the German leading circles were "satisfactory" concerning the principal questions. "In December 1940", said Szálasi later, "we decided not to initiate a special foreign policy of our own so long as the government in power acts in the spirit of the Berlin—Rome—Tokyo axis . . ." ⁷² The German press, too, was correct in writing in the middle of March 1941 that the Hungarian right-wing parties fully agreed with the foreign policy of the government. ⁷³

This situation was not changed even by the Yugoslav crisis that broke out in March 1941. The anti-German contents of the consolidation of Hungarian—Yugoslav relations, of the "eternal" treaty of friendship, were rather uncertain despite all the subjective designs of Teleki. The treaty did not actually counter the German plans; on the contrary, it did fit well with them because of the fact that the Germans hoped to accomplish Yugoslavia's joining forces with the Axis Powers without the need of a military intervention and considered Hungary suitable for the role of a mediator. And when it became evident that the Yugoslav government was not willing to yield to German demands, the debate in Hungarian government quarters was not focussed on the issue of being partners or not to the military occupation of Yugoslavia by the Germans; they only tried to find a solution that would not

⁷² O.L.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1. Szálasi's speech at the Great Council of the Arrow-Cross Party on January 9, 1943.

⁷³ Magyarország April 1, 1941.

entail the retaliation of the Western Powers for Hungary's participation in the German military operation on the Balkans. Although the crisis led to Teleki's suicide, it remained an altogether internal governmental matter; both Imrédy and the arrow-cross abstained from exploiting it, and the Germans felt no need for driving them into activity.

The arrow-cross people had to give up even the method of extra-parliamentary "mass mobilization" that they tried to employ again in autumn 1940. They were definitely discouraged from doing so by another uprising of the Iron Guard in Roumania which broke out late January 1941, and by the reaction to this event in Germany.

Parallel with all this, there was an increasing number of arrow-cross declarations of loyalty to Horthy, of statements demanding the checking of demagogism, denouncing "ill-considered" actions.

So the decline of the arrow-cross "movement" and party life continued. As we have shown in the foregoing, this regression started late summer 1939, and the temporary upswing in the summer and autumn of 1940 did not change the situation substantially. Clearly, it would be a mistake to overestimate the decline in the mass influence of the arrow cross at that time; as appears from police information, more than 200 local arrow-cross organizations were formed even during 1940. True, many of them in premises where arrow-cross organizations had existed before but dissolved later on. ⁷⁴ The fact remains that their influence and organizational power grew to a certain extent in autumn 1940.

Yet, beginning from December 1940, there were more and more news about the slackening of party life. Informers of the gendarmerie reported in January that while schemes and lists were prepared in the party centre "to get everything ready for taking over" there was no working in the various party organizations, the majority of the membership had not paid membership fees for 6—8 months, and the "officials were accusing one another because of the decrease of activities". ⁷⁵ Another report stated that there had been a fall in party life for several months. After his release from prison, Szálasi practically called off all organizational activities — he wanted to "gather information" about what was going on. The outcome of this inquiry was that the "leading brother" became distrustful of most of the leading figures. "Szálasi got especially disappointed in the field of organization work in factories. Even the most favourably presented organizations turned out to be lies." ⁷⁶ Numerous party organizations in the country disintegrated in

⁷⁴ PI Cs. j. ö. January 17, 1941.

⁷⁵ Ibid. January 10, 1941.

⁷⁶ Ibid. January 17, 1941.

spring 1941; the "poor", dissatisfied with the party, began to turn their back on the movement, partly because of the incapacity of the party, partly because of the aversion against the corrupt, embezzling local leaders.⁷⁷

While the arrow-cross movement was at that time characterized on the public stage of political life by the above-outlined stagnation, impotency and decay, there was an intense fermentation and regrouping going on in the internal life of the party proper, and in the extreme right circles in general.

The inherent differences of the Arrow-Cross Party became sharper once more — only they were much more profound than those observed late 1938, or in winter 1939, with Szálasi himself as the point of issue. After Szálasi's release from prison early autumn 1940, not only the drawing-room groups of the arrow cross, and the dissident deputies joined the party, but also the "radical" anarchist factions of the old Hungarists who had been expelled by Hubay and his men, or had withdrawn into passivity out of discontent, had joined other factions, or had been released under the general pardon. By October 1940, the old Hungarists whom Hubay and Csia tried to expel were again assigned their part in the movement and the organizations under instructions by Ferenc Szálasi.⁷⁸ Information received in December showed that the old Hungarists, and all those who had been released from prison or returned from exile in Germany, were placed in important posts. Ferenc Omelka and Illés Dalbosfalvi — notorious Hungarists — were put in charge of "factory organization". Lumpen-proletarian militants of the András Török—József Párkányi type were given jobs in workers' organizations or in the "workers' headquarters" at Nap utca.⁷⁹ Their position was strengthened by the circumstance that in spring 1941, after having served his term, Ferenc Kassai-Schallmayer, head of organizatory work among the workers and one of the more "radical" men of the arrow-cross leaders, again entered on the duties of his former office.

The "radicals" were hopeful that Szálasi would push back the "politicians of the Hubay type and the 'Spiessbürger' ". But they soon had to learn that their days had gone, and that not even Szálasi was able, or willing for that matter, to help them. In his maniac obsession and lust for power, Szálasi tried to rally all "brethren" around himself, was not willing to take notice of the groups of different aspirations, was convinced that his "theory" and authority as a "Führer" would silence any other will, and would result in nothing else but a soldierly, unconditional carrying out of the service order. Needless to say, even Szálasi was powerless in the face of the trends in for-

⁷⁷ Ibid. April 11, 1941.

⁷⁸ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, op. cit. p. 70.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

eign and home politics that governed his movement; as a matter of fact, he was even less able to act than Hubay and his men because his obsession and political "inflexibility" rendered him rather unskilful in adjusting himself to these trends. As it happened, everybody was getting "disappointed" with everybody.

A variety of internal oppositionist combinations emerged in February. Hubay and his followers, and Szálasi's "old guard" soon formed special guards of their own at the gate of the House of Faith.⁸⁰ In March 1941, one group of the "radicals", headed by the organization leader of the old Hungarist Movement, by the peasants' and workers' "bench-holder", issued a leaflet entitled "Ordeal of the Bier. Open Letter to Mr. Ferenc Szálasi".⁸¹ The letter explained that by starting his movement Szálasi had set the framework for "a popular, socialist political activity". And that the "spirit of our working people agreed with the spirit of our movement's radical trend, had become cemented together". Yet in spring 1939, when the Hungarist Party was proscribed, the Arrow-Cross Party was formed, and elections were held, there was a radical change: The Party and the functions were swamped by "Caiaphases and Pilates", Hubay and his men turned "honourable national socialist deputy esquires" and "as the devout respecters of the orders of authorities" undid old national socialist leaders before the elections. Anybody who countered them, who spoke of the "radical popular idea" or made mention of party funds, was expelled from the party. The makers of the leaflet said they had expected that Szálasi would put things right. But this did not happen, and Szálasi joined this group of leaders without any criticism. "You ought to have seen at once and remedy the tremendous and fatal error that the interests of the peasants and workers had no representation within the party". "You had put your shoulder to the wheel of those who altogether fail to realize the alpha and omega of our movement: classless brotherly community and pure Hungarian national socialism in the spirit of a popular policy." Using hardly mistakable terms, the leaflet declared Szálasi insane: "We were simply unable to comprehend certain passages of your speech." "You should have a spiritual rest", the leaflet went on, "peace be with you Ferenc Szálasi, you vanishing shadow and hazy, dissipating figure . . . You have become a reversed Apostle Paul, you have abandoned the host of sufferers and have become the lagman of the Caiaphases and Pilates." The leaflet then warns Szálasi again to comply with their demands, or else they would abandon him for good.

⁸⁰ PI Cs. j. ö. January 24, 1941.

⁸¹ Tetemrehívás [Ordeal of the Bier], March 1941, Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár [National Széchenyi Library].

The revolt of the "radical" — anarchist fascist elements was suppressed by Szálasi and his men relatively easily. Most of them were temporarily silenced, some of them expelled from the party, and others, not acquiescing in their neglect, withdrew from the party of their own accord.⁸² At the Great Council of the party in March 1941, Hubay criticized the internal "radical" opposition which was demanding action and, of course, positions, saying: "The time when the Arrow-Cross Party has to act will be determined by the party itself and not by our opponents, and we are by no means willing to do the favour to international Jewry and their comrades-in-arms that our party should interfere with the situation in Central Europe by unjustified and foolish actions, and delay the European victory of the new ideology."⁸³

However, as concerned the "fate" of the party, the process of fermentation that started from the other side, among the arrow-cross deputies and within the "politician" group of the genteel middle class, was much more important. This "oppositionist" movement, whose emergence was instrumental also in silencing the "radicals", was a concomitant of the stand taken by the leading German circles and of the new situation created by the formation of Imrédy's party.

Namely it became increasingly evident that it was not Szálasi whom the official German circles supported. More exactly, they based their political designs not on Szálasi. Opinions were voiced that there existed "differences" between Szálasi and the German leaders, that Szálasi was forfeiting the confidence of the Germans. When the time of calling to account came after 1945, Szálasi and the arrow-cross leaders who remained loyal to him, often referred to these differences as a clumsy defence and justified them with profound "ideological" reasons.⁸⁴ It was alleged that Szálasi's Hungarism, as a specifically Hungarian theory of fascism, came into antagonism with the Nazi ideology which would not tolerate any theory that claimed equivalence to theirs.

True, Szálasi's "ideological" mania may certainly have provoked a lot of aversion on the part of the German leaders, especially among the "ideologists" of the Nazi party. It is just as doubtless that — like in case of his other brain waves — Szálasi was in dead earnest about his Hungarist "imperial" conception and was convinced that the Germans distrusted him mainly because of this Hungarist theory. But all this may have played an utterly

⁸² SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* pp. 76—78.

⁸³ *Magyarország* March 7, 1941.

⁸⁴ See OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1; Bm.Nb. Imrédy Béla népbírószági pere [Béla Imrédy's Trial before the People's Tribunal], evidence given by Ferenc Szálasi; Bm.Nb. Pálffy Fidél népbírószági pere [Fidél Pálffy's Trial before the People's Tribunal] p. 42.

insignificant role in the decisions of the German leaders. They knew only too well that in case of a sudden national socialist change they would command all means necessary for having a hold over Szálasi, and that Szálasi's "independent" designs would dwindle to nothing in practice.

There arose differences between Szálasi and the Volksbund, too, and the German leaders did not like these either. In autumn 1940, pursuant to the Hungaro-German minority agreement, the Volksbund turned active and the frictions that had existed between the arrow-cross men and the leaders of the Volksbund from the outset became more intense. Many a petty bourgeois whose mother tongue was German had joined the Arrow-Cross Party in the beginning. Yet, beginning from autumn 1940, belonging to the German "ethnic group" offered a number of advantages, more and more people at the extreme right wing "became aware" of their German extraction. The "Germanization" of family names grew practically to the dimensions of a mass movement. At the beginning of October 1940, Szálasi's legal adviser informed him in a confidential letter: "... while you were away, after the conclusion and publication of the German minority agreement, there was such an embarrassment, even dispositions at dissimulation, among our party brethren who had been persecuted or suffered disadvantages because of their arrow-cross leanings, and had, or have, absolutely nothing to do with Germanism, that as your counsel I felt it my duty to make inquiries about the intentions of Dr. Basch and his men." But Basch and his group, wishing to recruit as large an organization as possible, rejected all attempts to enter an agreement. The above-cited letter also contained the information that Basch was to go to Germany in mid-October where "the German Minister of Foreign Affairs would ask him about Szálasi's opinion concerning the problem of German minorities in Hungary".⁸⁵

This "delicate" question was handled by the arrow-cross men with utmost care. After his release from prison Szálasi visited several arrow-cross organizations, including Budaörs where he declared that loyalty to the Arrow-Cross Party and to the Volksbund are "altogether compatible".⁸⁶ In October the party instructed in a confidential order the arrow-cross organizations not to put obstacles in the way of the Volksbund's organizatory work, and to try to establish friendly relations with its local groups.⁸⁷ Indeed, there was great need for such an instruction: in all villages with many inhabitants of German extraction there was obstinate quarrel between the arrow-cross and the Volksbundist leaders. But there was one issue in which Szálasi was not willing

⁸⁵ OL.Bm. The Szálasi Trial, Roll 1. Letter (anonymous) to Ferenc Szálasi, October 7, 1940.

⁸⁶ SOMBOR-SCHWEINITZER, *op. cit.* p. 71.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 71.

to yield: when in November 1940 Basch returned from Germany and demanded that the Arrow-Cross Party members of German extraction be compelled by supreme order to join the Volksbund, Szálasi declared that he, as a Hungarian citizen, is bound by the law, and that joining the German ethnic group is a matter within the sphere of "liberty of conscience".⁸⁸ This attitude which was received with a storm of indignation by Basch and his men, doubtless added to the distrust the Nazi leaders felt against Szálasi. But this was obviously just another side issue, and only one of the manifestations of the principal cause of differences.

The principal reason of Szálasi's "falling into disgrace" — as has been indicated — was the fact that by the end of autumn 1940 the German leading circles were definitely convinced that to support the independent power aspirations of the arrow-cross movement, to entrust the leadership of the Hungarian extreme right wing to Szálasi and the arrow-cross movement would be opposed to German interests. Such a step might have turned Horthy and the Hungarian ruling circles against Germany, would lead to domestic economic and political confusion in Hungary, and would entail grave consequences in entire Southeast Europe. But the German government knew very well at the same time that Szálasi's party was the only extreme rightist movement with a mass base. So the idea was to continue German-Hungarian relations based on the Horthyist government quarters first of all, but to create meanwhile a unified extreme right wing which incorporated a leading stratum "able of government" and had a wide mass influence at the same time, to counterbalance Horthy's "vacillation" in this way, and to prepare for a sudden extreme rightist change that might become necessary. The conclusion was this: There must be a fusion, or a close coalition at least, between Imrédy's party and the Arrow-Cross Party but in such a way that Szálasi submit himself and his movement to the leadership of Imrédy and his group. But Szálasi was not willing to do so, insisted on his role as a leader with maniacal stubbornness, and rejected any extreme rightist union not formed under his leadership, under the hegemony of the Arrow-Cross Party.

In extreme rightist quarters it soon became known that the German government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs were dissatisfied with Szálasi and in favour of Imrédy.

Some time later, at the Great Council of the party in April 1942, Szálasi said in a retrospect review of the history of differences within the party that the party crisis had begun at the time of his release from prison; as early as December 1940, then in February and March 1941, his most intimate co-

⁸⁸ VÁGÓ, PÁL, *op. cit.*

workers tried to persuade him to adapt himself to the Germans more closely, to join forces with Imrédy.⁸⁹ It appears from an entry in the *Hungarist Diary* that in February 1941 Málnási, recently released from prison, "admonished Szálasi to be more accommodating, more flexible towards the Germans".⁹⁰ But Szálasi refused to do so and the result was that the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the entire espionage organization of Himmler, as well as the leaders of the Volksbund turned against him.

The great majority of the arrow-cross leaders and deputies looked at Szálasi's "stubbornness" with increasing dissatisfaction. Many of the gentleman-opportunists hardly concealed their "suddenly" emerging attraction towards Imrédy. Behind Szálasi's back, even Hubay spoke enthusiastically about Imrédy.⁹¹ Jenő Ruzskay, who had first-hand information about the German "guiding principles" as a result of his many official and espionage relations, also urged the unification union with Imrédy.⁹² The Baky-Pálffy group, which merged with the Arrow-Cross Party under German instructions in September 1940, as well as the group of Olivér Rupperecht, the general editor of *Magyarság*, started a widespread internal complot against Szálasi to push the "leader brother" into the background.

Behind the anti-Szálasi movement stood Ferenc Rothen, formally head of the Southeast European press division of the German Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*), but actually one of the principal leaders of the German espionage organization in Hungary, and Wilhelm Höttl, the commissioner in Hungary of Department VI of the RSHA (*Reichssicherheits-hauptamt*), which was organizing and controlling intelligence work abroad. Szálasi, of course, was informed soon about the activities directed against him. An entry in the *Hungarist Diary* made late in 1940 runs as follows: "Under the intellectual guidance of Ferenc Rothen a group is forming in Hungary trying to impose upon this country the German practice of national socialism by all means. This group comprises the entire editorial staff of the daily *Magyarság*, Michaelis and Kienast (German journalists). The Pálffy faction is making advances to this group".⁹³ Another entry of spring 1941 says: "Szálasi's intelligence group (found out that): Baky is the source of the news, Rupperecht is the letter-box, Michaelis is the courier, and Rothen the evaluator. Each political news picked up in Hungary by the German

⁸⁹ OL.Bm.The Szálasi Trial, Roll 3. Szálasi's speech at the Great Council of the Arrow-Cross Party, April 7, 1942.

⁹⁰ Bm.Nb. Málnási Ödön népbíróvási pere [Ödön Málnási's Trial before the People's Tribunal]. *Hungarista Napló* [Hungarist Diary], spring 1941.

⁹¹ *Népszava* January 8, 1941.

⁹² *Magyarság* February 20, 1941.

⁹³ Bm.Nb. Endre László és társai népbíróvási pere [Trial before the People's Tribunal of László Endre and accomplices] Vol. II. *Hungarista Napló*.

intelligence men is directed into this channel and evaluated by Rothen who, in turn, has his seat in the German Foreign Office as one of the responsible and official persons in charge of Southeast European affairs. Rothen can play his hand as it just pleases him to meet our favours."⁹⁴ Another item in the *Hungarist Diary*: "Szálasi was presented unmistakable evidence to the effect that the Baky-Rothen companionship was preparing the party's disintegration."⁹⁵

Szálasi was being criticized increasingly in a variety of issues. While the "radicals" complained that "in 1937 Szálasi was a revolutionist for which he was imprisoned, but in 1940 he was released a broken man",⁹⁶ Baky, Pálffy, Rupprecht and the genteel leading stratum of the party in general blamed Szálasi for taking no steps against the "irresponsible" elements; for trying to build everything on the party members and neglecting politicians who, although not members of the arrow cross, are known for their extreme rightist feelings; for his reluctance to reach an agreement with the *Volksbund*; and, finally, for securing power for himself by "all means".⁹⁷ Along with these actions, more and more people came to realize that Szálasi was simply insane, that he had undergone some "psychic change" in prison. Making use of their various relations they took every effort to "discredit" Szálasi in the eyes of the Germans.⁹⁸

So it happened that in early 1941 the various groupings of the Hungarian extreme right wing were settling in the pattern of German policy and political designs. Imrédy and his party were supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The leaders of the older Hungarian National Socialist Party who had joined the arrow-cross movement (Baky, Pálffy, etc.), and the "politicians" conspiring against Szálasi in general, whose majority rendered regular agent's services to the Germans, found their principal supporters in the SS headed by Himmler, in the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, in the Gestapo, and among the leaders of the "active" German espionage organizations.⁹⁹ Arrow-cross "unity", with Szálasi holding the post of the "leader", still existed formally, but was doomed to complete and final disintegration should the occasion arise.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Bm.Nb. Omelka Ferenc népbíróági pere [Ferenc Omelka's Trial before the People's Tribunal], evidence given by Ferenc Omelka.

⁹⁷ Bm.Nb. Hubay Kálmán népbíróági pere [Kálmán Hubay's Trial before the People's Tribunal] p. 54.

⁹⁸ Bm.Nb. Málnási Ödön népbíróági pere.

⁹⁹ The secret relations between Germany and the Hungarian extreme right wing are not yet disclosed in every detail. For the espionage relations of the Baky-Pálffy-Rupprecht group see Bn.Nb. Endre László és társai népbíróági pere, Vol. II. Pálffy Fidél népbíróági pere, p. 28. Evidence given by Edmund Veesenmayer. The leaders of the

In such circumstances the upswing of the arrow-cross movement in autumn 1940 was not lasting; the movement's political importance and influence soon declined again.

This decline was further accelerated by the change taking place in spring 1941, by the final failure of Teleki's "armed neutrality" policy; by the appointment of the Bárdossy Government with its extreme rightist leanings; by Hungary's participation in the war against Yugoslavia, then against the Soviet Union. In this situation the German leading circles relaxed their extreme rightist pressure on the Hungarian government; for a while they were absolutely justified in concluding that through their relations with the Hungarian ruling circles — consolidated in the spirit of anti-Sovietism — they could enforce undisturbed their economic, military and political demands. Hence one further reason of the decline of the arrow-cross movement resulted from another shift to the right made by the Hungarian government, and not from an anti-German or antifascist attitude.

German dissatisfaction with Szálasi led to practical steps in the new situation: under German instructions in early autumn 1941, there occurred a profound split in the arrow-cross movement that had become unified hardly a year before. The United Hungarian National Socialist Party (the overwhelming majority of the leaders of this more "moderate" group, which sympathized with Imrédy, were direct agents of the Gestapo and the SS) again retired from the Arrow-Cross Party led by Szálasi; other arrow-cross groups (mainly from the parliamentary faction of the party) joined Imrédy's Party of Hungarian Renascence. Imrédy and his group and the leaders of the United Hungarian National Socialist Party — which had no substantial influence either — immediately agreed to form a close alliance leaving out Szálasi and the Arrow-Cross Party. Otherwise the break in the party fell short of German expectations: the decimated but still considerable arrow-cross masses did not join the United Hungarian National Socialist Party.

By that time the disillusionment and falling away of the masses began to increase rapidly. In the period of the anti-Soviet war, which became more and more unpopular, the activities of the arrow-cross people were aimed at persuading the working masses to endure in the war to the end, to subordinate themselves to war "discipline" while anti-Semitic and anti-communist instigation, although largely "freed" from social demagogism by that time,

Arrow-Cross Party maintained relations through Sándor Csia with S. Urban, a commissioner in Hungary of the German intelligence service; officially, Urban was a clerk of Dunagőzhajózási Társaság [Danube Shipping Company]. (Bm.Nb. Endre László és társai népbíróági pere. Pálffy Fidél népbíróági pere, p. 18, evidence given by Emil Kovarcz.)

was still going on. They even had to postpone the realization of the Hungarist "paradise" to the time following the "victorious end" of the war — which was receding in ever farther distances of the misty future. Szálasi and his group of leaders that remained loyal to him continued to take great efforts to keep their hold on the masses. The more evident it became that the Hungarian ruling circles would not hear of coming to an understanding with them, that Germany had no intention to help them in assuming power, and that even their "gentleman" allies were letting them down, the more the arrow-cross people emphasized their "popular", even "worker" composition. They knew that their badly weakened "value" could be maintained only so long as they had some influence on the masses. Yet these assertions were not able to halt the falling away of their masses in the new circumstances. Beginning from 1941, the growing activity of the left-wing, democratic and socialist forces contributed increasingly to the decline of their influence. Although the Kállay Government that replaced Bárdossy in early 1942 crushed the growing anti-fascist and independence movement with the most brutal measures, the prestige and influence of the anti-fascist left wing, its political influence grew irresistibly. This is not to say that some sort of leftist, democratic change should have taken place within the masses misled by the arrow cross; even if most of them were disappointed with the arrow-cross movement, and withdrew into passivity, they did not get rid of the fascist ideological influences until the end, until Hungary was liberated in 1944—1945.

The decisive change in World War II took place early 1943. Under the effect of the victory of Stalingrad, the Hungarian military defeat at Voronezh, the Hungarian ruling circles tried to loosen their alliance with Nazi Germany, and the Kállay Government prepared for an ill-devised "pulling out". It was again imperative for Germany — more than ever before as a matter of fact — to have means for applying external and internal pressure on the Hungarian government. Yet for exerting such pressure from below, only a badly weakened arrow-cross movement was available to them. The arrow-cross leaders themselves admitted that, compared to the highest membership of about 250—300 000 in 1939, the number of members only amounted to one-third of the former by spring 1944; and the decrease of the party's influence was even worse than that. In 1938—39 the party represented a considerable mass movement, if only in the extreme reactionary sense, but this was no longer the case in 1943 and 1944; its immediate influence did not go beyond the layers of the most purblind army officers, bourgeois-lumpenproletarians at that time. Edmund Veessenmayer, the plenipotentiary German commissioner in Hungary, presented a most discouraging picture in his notes made about his Budapest talks in April 1943, saying that

the extreme right wing in Hungary was weak, and emphasizing specially that Szálasi's movement "had dwindled into complete insignificance". After his further inquiries in Budapest in late autumn 1943 he pointed out that the occupation of Hungary can, and must, be combined with the creation of an extreme rightist coalition on a wide basis to be approved even by Horthy; but he admitted at the same time that the divided extreme right-wing parties and factions, engaged in a bitter struggle with one another, were unable of any serious action of their own.

The German occupation of Hungary took place on March 19, 1944. Horthy finally consented to appoint a new puppet government headed by Sztójay but neither the arrow cross, nor any other national socialists were included in it, partly because of Horthy's opposition, partly because of the reluctance of the Germans who tried to find the possibly "most peaceful" settlement. The arrow-cross movement provided a sort of outside support to the new regime, and while the country raced downhill towards ultimate collapse at increasing speed, the arrow cross, headed by Szálasi, were hopefully waiting for their time to come. Under the conditions of the German occupation, the arrow-cross movement exploited the favourable opportunity; this resulted in a slight upswing and a more or less renewed organization of the movement. But, for the time being, the Germans felt no need for putting them into "independent" action; the Sztójay Government, relying on the general staff, the right wing of the government party, and the Party of Hungarian Renaissance, carried out all demands of the Germans in respect of warfare, the economic plundering of the country, and the mass deportation of the Jews.

The "hour" for which the arrow-cross people had been waiting finally came with the sudden change of August 1944: Roumania changed sides, and the Soviet army advanced to the borders of Hungary. Faced with this situation, Horthy dismissed the Sztójay Government, and appointed a new one headed by General Géza Lakatos, charging him with the principal duty of preparing an armistice. These preparations, which ended ultimately in a shameful failure of "backing out" of the war, took about two weeks; with their reactionary, anti-Soviet background, with their delays, cowardice and impotence, they represent a disgraceful special chapter in the history of the catastrophe policy of the ruling circles. Although the Germans were not informed of all steps taken by Horthy at that time — at last, in late September, Horthy sent a delegation to the Soviet Union asking for a preliminary armistice, which was then signed in Moscow on October 11 — they had accurate information of the preparations to "pull out" and took their counter measures. Exploiting Horthy's vacillations that lasted practically to the last

minute, the Germans sent reinforcements to the Budapest area, and began to prepare a putsch for coercing the Regent to resign and for helping Szálasi to assume power.

The situation in late August and early September 1944 showed that Germany on the way to an early defeat had exhausted its last Horthyist reserves and that the "genteel" new-bourgeois extreme right wing led by Imrédy had disintegrated altogether (Imrédy and the leaders of the Party of Hungarian Renaissance withdrew from the Sztójay Government in August 1944); thus the German leading circles had no choice but to call in Szálasi and his arrow-cross groups. The preparations for the putsch were made easier by the circumstance that the government took no serious steps whatsoever against the arrow cross; although a decree on the dissolution of political parties was issued in late August, this hardly interfered with the organizatory actions of the arrow cross. On October 1, 1944, Veessenmayer, the plenipotentiary commissioner of the Germans, flew to Hitler, and the steps to be taken in connection with Hungary were definitely agreed upon at Hitler's headquarters. In the course of the talks Hitler accepted Veessenmayer's plan according to which Szálasi's raising to power was to be carried out by relying on forces in Hungary as far as possible, and with the semblance of legality.

This plan succeeded more or less: when, without adequate military and political preparation, Horthy proclaimed in the radio at noon on October 15 that he had applied for an armistice to the Allied Powers, the German and arrow-cross machinery was set in motion; German military units and the arrow-cross groups armed by them carried out the putsch within a few hours. They even succeeded in compelling Horthy to revoke officially his proclamation, to make known his resignation, and to sign the letter that appointed Szálasi head of the "Government of national unity".

And while Hungary's liberation by the Soviet army began, the reign of arrow-cross terror was unleashed. This terrorism had no mass base whatsoever; it relied on a part of the staff of officers, minor fanaticized groups of the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen elements. Besides an all-embracing bloody terror, this reign had its temporary basis in the circumstance that the fascist and reactionary contamination was still present in part of the working population, and that the masses in the broader sense were passive.

The arrow-cross movement was finally annihilated by Hungary's liberation, and this was the end also of the entire counterrevolutionary system, its fascist and semi-fascist trends; it was annihilated together with the counterrevolutionary system which gave birth to it, and which, for a while, raised this brand of fascism in Hungary to considerable proportions.

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