

# GOULASH-FASCISM: A SOCIO-LEGAL ANALYSIS OF HUNGARIAN FASCISM IN THE 30s

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**I**n this article I intend to analyse the three historical manifestations of Hungarian fascism from an ideological point of view with special attention to developments in the 1930s. First outlining the most important characteristics and focussing more on the specificities than the similarities with German fascism, I will examine the unfolding of ideological motifs in each historical form.

Fascism in Hungary, in contrast to the much more homogeneous Nazism, had three interlocking forms. The first chronologically, an harbinger in essence, was the White Terror. It was followed by twenty years of ultra-conservative government with its constitutional protofascism during the course of which the final and complete form, the many varieties of actual fascist and Nazi parties emerged. These three strands of fascism had however considerably more than a chronological relationship. They overlapped and influenced each other, carried the seeds and elements of the other, and, even though at times they opposed one another and in many ways were conflicting, they also nurtured and facilitated each other.

Ernst Nolte, examining the relationship between the extreme right and the state in Hungary, saw paradigmatic stages when compared to developments in Germany. Corresponding to the Weimar Republic he put the Bethlen era, with its policy of fulfilment and renunciation. In the years of Gombos' premiership he saw similarities

to the earliest period of Hitler's chancellorship.<sup>1</sup> Absent was the vital "spark" to start fascism: the clash of principles. Horthy was no Hindenburg, (he himself was one of the "Szedged men") and Bethlen<sup>2</sup> was not exactly a democratic liberal. There was no Left to speak of and even the Bethlen-Gombos change-over was not comparable to what happened on January 30, 1933 in Germany. Although Gombos fancied himself as the man of the people, and was the supreme commander of the most influential fascist party in the 1930s - he was no Hitler. Constitutional protofascism was "homegrown". Still, in the end with the 1944 takeover, in its final phase Hungarian fascism reached such peaks of brutality and destruction that for that short period of time it can be readily compared to Nazism. Sucked into the black hole of fascism Hungarian conservative politics became the casualty of the *Zeitgeist*.

Hungarians still perceive the Trianon treaty as the most traumatic event in Hungarian history, possibly surpassing that of *Mohacs*.<sup>3</sup> Without doubt, Hungary suffered the biggest loss of territory: two-thirds of it together with one-third of the population and commensurate economic losses. There was a further stipulation to pay reparations. All of Transylvania went to Romania, the northern provinces became part of Czechoslovakia, Austria gained some territory, and a large chunk in the south became part of Yugoslavia. Hungary lost its only sea-port, Fiume to Italy and even Poland acquired a small piece of Hungarian territory.<sup>4</sup> More than three million Magyars were suddenly under foreign domination also as a result of some rather arbitrary and unfortunate boundary-lines. The right of self-determination was invoked when a territory was to be severed from Hungary, but was consistently denied when it would have favoured Hungary.<sup>5</sup>

The economic consequences were stupendous. Before the war, 75 percent of Hungarian trade was with other districts of the Monarchy. Hungarian wheat exports and the milling industry were protected by high agricultural tariffs. Hungary was

1 E. NOLTE, THREE FACES OF FASCISM 3 (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1965).

2 Count Bethlen, a Transylvanian aristocrat was prime minister 1921-1931. Gombos, while also actively leading one of the clandestine right-radical parties, took over and was prime minister until his death in 1936.

3 1514 C.E. The defeat of the Hungarian army at the battle of Mohacs signalled the advent of 150 years of Turkish rule. Hungary was divided into three parts, Transylvania staying formally independent, the middle triangle under Turkish occupation, and Western-Hungary as part of the Habsburg empire. The saying: "more was lost at Mohacs" is still used. In the battle, not only the king died, along with a huge number of nobles and peasants, but the country's independence was lost. Two empires, the Ottoman and the German-Roman took over Hungary and the Habsburgs stayed on even after the Turks left.

4 The new borders of Hungary were settled with a "formidable load of injustice", to the point, that - as Toynbee wrote fourteen years later - when assessing the danger-points, the "worst three places being the frontiers of Hungary, the eastern frontiers of Germany and Austria." Toynbee: *Territorial Arrangements*, in A. TOYNEEBE (et al.), THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES AND AFTER (Allen and Unwin 1935).

5 The actual determination of boundary questions was left to the Foreign Secretaries of the Principal Allied Powers. The task to apply the principles was stupendous. They were faced with mixed border-populations by centuries of intermarriages, unreliable statistics and at times deliberate falsifications. So, a working decision was made, that when "having the choice to make between the Allied and an enemy country, the Commission must not hesitate, however strong its desires of legitimate impartiality may be, to favour the Allied side." DAVID LLOYD GEORGE, THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PEACE TREATIES, Vol. II, 919 (Golancz 1938).

primarily an agricultural country (it was called the pantry of the Monarchy) - in 1913 about 16 percent of the national income was produced by manufacturing. As a direct result of the Peace treaty, the home-market was reduced by about sixty percent. The losses in natural resources were also enormous.

The Treaty of Trianon made an immense impact on Hungarian self-consciousness. It devastated not only the economy but Hungarian national pride. The quest for a revision of Trianon became the most urgent and important issue of Hungarian politics, culture and even everyday life.<sup>6</sup> For eighteen years<sup>7</sup> the flags were flying half-mast. Hungary was in mourning.

Hungarians were always given to a kind of patriotic sorrow. It was so important a part of Hungarian weltanschauung, that during the course of the nineteenth century linguistical renewal, a special word: "*honfibu*" was created for it. Strongly demoralised by the trauma of the treaty, faced with serious blows to their self-identity, they responded belligerently. Hungarians traditionally and vigorously mistreated their numerous minorities and had a jovial paternalistic attitude about it. Now, insulted by the sombre appraisal of the Western democracies there was indignant defence of the chauvinistic minority policies and the forceful magyarisation programs.

The concept of "justice" as it was understood within these perimeters created lasting tunnel-vision. Count Apponyi, who was a statesman of European repute, argued about history validating the territorial status quo in his fluent and elegant French, English and Italian.<sup>8</sup> He used words and sentiments as: "race", "inferior", "martyrdom". His reasoning took portentous and self-defeating turns.

[T]he consequence would be the transfer of national hegemony to races which to the present day, still stand on a lower level of civilisation.<sup>9</sup>

The rage against what was considered the injustice of the peace treaty altogether blinded not only Apponyi but most of the country to the extent that the existing possibility of significantly softening the terms was never explored.<sup>10</sup> The tone was set for thunderous patriotic slogans for decades to come.

6 This all-pervasive sentiment was so strong, that the Zionist martyr Hannah Senesh in 1938, one year before her aliyah, wrote in her diary how she carved the map of Hungary and the letters "N.N.S." into a bench while visiting Czechoslovakia. The letters stand for "*Nem, Nem, Soha!*" (no, no, never!) which was one of the irredentist Hungarian slogans, meaning never to give up the fight for the lost territories. HANNAH SENESH HER LIFE AND DIARY 58 (Shocken Books 1973).

7 In 1938, with the First Vienna Award Hungary regained the "Felvidek". The fact that this was bounty from Germany's overrunning Czechoslovakia did not sour the elation.

8 He informed the Paris Conference that the terms of peace were unacceptable to his country and his reasoning included points such as that Hungary's treatment is the harshest (which undoubtedly was so); and that Hungary was not responsible for the war, not being completely independent at the outbreak of the war. He claimed, "Hungary had all the conditions of organic unity with one exception - racial unity". LLOYD GEORGE, *supra* note 5, at 964-5.

9 He further elaborated about this "transfer of hegemony to an inferior civilisation...to a race which ... stands on an inferior cultural level". This did not cut ice with the participants of the Peace Conference, since it was well-known that, in the words of Lloyd George; "[t]he Magyar and German majority ... were responsible for the illiteracy of the Slavonic population". *Id.* at 966.

10 "Had he devoted his criticism to these areas [the border areas where Magyars were in majority]

The upheaval caused by the lost war and the looming peace treaty climaxed in the communist take-over of government in 1919. As a reaction various anti-communist groups - mostly ex-officers of the Austro-Hungarian K.u.K army and unemployed civil servants - rallied at Szeged to fight against the proletarian dictatorship. With them, the first strands and characteristics of Hungarian fascism appeared in this provincial town in South-East Hungary. These groups could be called "professional" right wing conspirators because from the time of the collapse of the K.u.K. army this is how they spent most of their time.<sup>11</sup> In Vienna the conservative big and medium landowners were gathering under the guidance of Count Bethlen. Later on, as consolidation was setting in, the political chasm of these months deepened significantly further: between counter revolutionaries (Gombos Imredy) - ideologically more fascistoid, who sought alliance with Germany - and anti-revolutionaries (Horthy, Bethlen). This latter group represented the political direction that served fascism by default, more as a by-product of ambivalent foreign and internal policies and less by design, almost like "victims" to their own irredentism and conservatism. They preferred Mussolini and his type of fascism. Admiral Horthy being on good terms with all these groups became their leader.

There was no articulate ideology observable during the White terror. Revenge can hardly be called an ideology and revenge was what the special squads set out to do. The name "counter-revolution" was the essence and the entirety of the "ideology". Being what it was it also carried its own destiny and set its own limits. It defined and condemned itself to a reflected identity.<sup>12</sup> However, it had a fuzzy, nebulous program: "*Szegedi Gondolat*" (Szeged Idea) which promoted antisemitism, chauvinistic nationalism and irredentism with the main thrust: anti-communism. While the antisemitism of the Szeged men had a nationalist and an economic character, it already had a distinctly racial ingredient, palpable in the terror wrought by the special squads, formed to fight the communists. During the reign of the Dictatorship, all in all 587 people were killed, many of whom were actual criminals. The White terror murdered five to six thousand victims, a lot of them Jews.<sup>13</sup> These squads went on murder rampages and conducted pogroms. The vicious brutality introduced a qualitative change in Hungarian antisemitism. The White terror made violence if not exactly *comme-il-faut* but at least socially acceptable. The traditional elements of Magyar self-definition, fierce nationalism, Christianity and provincialism were becoming aggressive, racist.

In the year after the war, Hungary lost its form of government and two-thirds of its territory. The Dual Monarchy collapsed. Hungary became a Republic. In quick

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he had at his disposal material which would have enabled him to make a powerful and, as regards some districts, the irresistible appeal for redress on behalf of his fellow-countrymen." *Id.* at 967.

11 Eros, *Hungary*, in EUROPEAN FASCISM 115 (S.J. Woolf ed., 2nd ed. Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1970).

12 Weber, *Revolution? Counterrevolution? What Revolution?*, in FASCISM A READER'S GUIDE 441 (Walter Laqueur ed. Wildwood House 1976).

13 R. BRAHAM, THE POLITICS OF GENOCIDE Vol. 1, 35 (Columbia U.P. 1981).

succession there was a Socialist government, then a Communist dictatorship, followed by vicious counterrevolution. In a daze the country settled down to the rule of an ultra-conservative, blinkered regime with a Regent who still used his title from the Monarchy. Two magnates of the Vienna group, Count Teleki, a Transylvanian aristocrat, a friend of Horthy, who guided Hungary to consolidation and Count Bethlen, together with Gombos, one of the Szeged men, forged the so-called Government party out of the Christian Nationals and the Small-holders. In spite of many differences the three met on the common platform of the Christian-national principle. The liberal-conservative Vienna-group consolidated its ruling position relying on and integrating the Szeged men, although once they felt that Hungary was "saved", the more conservative politicians preferred to return to parliamentary authoritarianism, and rule via drastic legislation, strong police force and efficient civil servants.<sup>14</sup> While Hitler did away with the Parliament altogether with the enabling law and the Gleichschaltung, Hungarian fascism was acted out within strict constitutional forms.

The big estates and landed aristocracy were capitalised early in the conditions created by the class compromise of Bismarck's Germany. Not so in Hungary. After a post-war, limited agrarian reform the large and medium estates still accounted for over 50 percent of land, and about 46.5 percent were smallholdings. The semi-feudal structure of agriculture infused the social structure and the development of capitalism with its provincialism. Even anti-modernity in Hungary stemmed more from provincialism than from disenchantment. The semi-feudal social structure was reflected in the political system which with its backwardness resembled in many ways that of Great Britain in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>15</sup> Although before the First World War the workers movement was strong in Hungary, after 1918-1919 the Communists and the Social Democrats were discredited. The re-establishment of the open ballot in 1922 resulted in the return of a negligible working class and peasant opposition. While the Communist party was illegal all through the Horthy-era, Bethlen allowed the Social Democrats reasonable freedom - but not in the rural areas. He did not want the largely apathetic peasantry to be stirred up. The reason for this was that he feared less the proletariat than the three million serfs.

Hungary entered the 1930s - as did the rest of the world - in the clutches of economic recession. The collapse of agricultural prices severely hit Hungary as agriculture provided the main export item between the wars. Hungary, primarily an agrarian country, rested on the basis of archaic latifundia. Out of four-and-a-half million people engaged in agriculture more than two-thirds were landless agrarian proletariat.<sup>16</sup> The semi-feudal structure made the Great Depression even harsher on

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- 14 Hungary had the most overexpanded civil service and bureaucracy in Europe. Thirty-nine per cent of the yearly budget was spent on administration. N. NAGY-TALAVERA, *THE GREEN SHIRTS AND THE OTHERS* 69 (Hoover Institution Press 1970)
- 15 THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, *SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SURVEY* 57 (Oxford U.P. 1939)
- 16 NAGY-TALAVERA, *supra* note 14, at 60.

the peasantry. Their lives were abominable.<sup>17</sup> Poverty stricken (and politically singularly immature) peasantry and heavy urban unemployment made Hungary the "nation of three million beggars". Unemployment passed the 200,000 level, about one third of the size of the industrial labour force.<sup>18</sup> The petty bourgeoisie, the strata most susceptible to fascism, joined the ranks of former public servants, who already lost their jobs when the Succession States swiftly dismissed and even expelled a good many of them. Administration traditionally was the turf of the Hungarian gentry. It was thoroughly nepotistic and meant long term employment security, guaranteed promotion through seniority, was well paid and was considered gentlemanly.<sup>19</sup> In the last decades of the Dual monarchy the impoverished gentry found economic haven in the public sector, while the freshly emancipated Jews entered the intellectual fields, engaged in commerce and thus embarked on the industrialisation of the economy. The so-called liberal professions were middle-class in the decades before the first war, a bourgeoisie made up mostly of Jews.<sup>20</sup> After Trianon, when the suddenly unemployed public servants were eager for the liberal jobs, they found them filled overwhelmingly with Jews.<sup>21</sup>

The government's widely popular remedy to unemployment - apart from organised charity - was the promise of containment of what was conceived as Jewish economic dominance. For the unemployed lumpenproletar and the petty bourgeoisie - in other words an overwhelming strata of the middle class - anti-Jewish legislation promised easy access not only to jobs but to personal economic advancement. For the ruling class this racial panacea served as a popularly accepted subterfuge to avoid real reforms. In the past Hungarian minority policy required the cooperation and the enthusiastic reliability of the Jews. After Trianon, not having any minorities left - aside from the Swabians - this was not so any more. Not surprisingly, propaganda that advocated that the Jews were responsible for all poverty, even the deterioration of the peasantry was not discouraged.

Thus the way was prepared for anti-Jewish legislation, the first of which was ACT XV, enacted in 1938. It introduced Professional Chambers to serve as a network for most liberal professions. The concept itself - compulsory membership in professional chambers, an innovation on medieval guilds - was borrowed from

17 While Budapest was part of twentieth century Europe in glitter and in culture, in the country bodily punishment was still legal, accepted and widely used, administered mostly with sticks and sometimes by slapping. Women were the prey of the landlord. Hunger and hopelessness were an integral part of everyday life. The celebrated case of the "arsenic women" who in their misery and dark superstition systematically poisoned their husbands took place in the middle Tisza region. Maybe not so coincidentally this was also the area where a fascist movement first attracted popular support in 1931. *Id.* at 108.

18 I. BEREND and G. RANKI, *A MAGYAR GAZDASAG SZAZ EVE* (Hundred Years of Hungarian Economy) 130, 191 (Budapest 1972).

19 After 1867, the year when Hungarian Jews were legally emancipated, the liberal professions, not being respectable and sought after were an opening for Jews in the framework of social integration.

20 NAGY-TALAVERA, *supra* note 14, at 41.

21 This prompted the 1920 Numerous Clausus Act. The motivation for the legislation was on one hand to "punish" the Jews for the alleged part played in the Red Terror, but more importantly to decrease the number of Jewish intellectuals.

the Italian model of corporatively structured economy. The Hungarian version was designed to keep down the number of Jewish lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists and actors. The act stipulated that Jews could only be admitted to the local chambers when the ratio of Jews in that chamber was below 20 percent. Salaried Jewish professionals became exposed to a compulsory process of semi-annual dismissals. It adopted a basically religious rather than racial definition of Jewishness. It represented a brand of right-wing constitutional antisemitism and openly violated the fundamental principle of ACT VII 1867, which had granted emancipation. It was however never implemented, because by the end of the year the second Jewish Bill was submitted to Parliament, and was passed as Act IV 1939. It differed from its predecessor by its definition of who is a Jew. Following the Nazi model, Jewishness was not considered a question of religion any more. It became a race. A person with at least one Jewish parent, or two Jewish grandparents, even if converted to Christianity, was a Jew. This was more "liberal" than the Nazi concept of "mixed Jewish blood".<sup>22</sup> After the second Jewish Law, the racial definition was to be applied in every decree and enactment affecting Jews.<sup>23</sup> Although the Act stated as its principal objective "the restriction of the Public and Economic functioning of the Jews", it went far beyond economic containment.<sup>24</sup> However, it was not fully implemented until 1944. The most important reason for that was a drastic change in the economy. A year before, in 1938, the government approved a five year plan for rearmament and economic development which revived economic activity and bolstered growth. The phenomena of unemployment, along with over-production and capital-shortage, vanished in the course of 1939.<sup>25</sup> Instead Hungary experienced labour shortage, insufficient productive capacity and inflation. Under these circumstances Jewish enterprises became vital assets to the national economy's rearmament efforts.

The Jewish response to all that was a logical consequence of - and has to be viewed within that context - the long history of Jewish assimilation in Hungary. It was poignantly expressed in a pamphlet published by a prominent member of the Jewish community:

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- 22 First Ordinance under the Reich Citizenship Law, 14 November 1935, in DOCUMENTS IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT, 1815-1939, 426 (G.A. Kertesz ed. Clarendon Press 1968)
- 23 Anti-Jewish legislation continued throughout the war. Marriages between Jews and non-Jews were prohibited in 1941. The Jews were being pushed more and more to the peripheries of society. From the spring of 1944 Hungary caught up with the rest of Axis-occupied Europe and in the period of nine months 600,000 Jews were murdered. This task was tackled with such enthusiasm, that when the Wehrmacht requisitioned the trains and thus the deportations would have come to a halt, Hungarian fascists "invented" the forced death-marches.
- 24 Jews were forbidden to acquire Hungarian citizenship; no Jew could vote unless he proved that his family was domiciled continuously in Hungary from 1867; absolute elimination of Jews from all positions in the public sector; severe constrictions on the economic functioning of Jews in the private sector; the already mentioned professional chambers were forbidden to have more Jews than 6 percent; Jewish artists and journalists were banned from positions of responsibility; Jews were barred from acquiring agricultural property, and so forth. Yehuda Don, *Economic Effect of Antisemitic Discrimination: the Case of the Hungarian Anti Jewish Legislation 1938-44* (unpublished).
- 25 The introduction of forced labour service for Jewish males in 1939 also removed tens of thousands of men from the labour market.

We are Hungarians and not Jews, not a different nation, because we are a separate denomination only when in our houses of worship we express our thanks and our innermost gratitude to the Almighty for His grace lavished on our Homeland and us, but in every other aspect of life we are only patriots, only Hungarians. (Manifesto of the representatives of the Hungarian and Transylvanian Jews on the 17th of March, 1848)

We profess this even today, - the spring of 1938.<sup>26</sup>

All through the Horthy era Hungarian Jews were supportive of the government and its policies. They were resigned to the genteel, selective antisemitism of the ruling classes and hoped that it would be a kind of insurance against the increasingly virulent racism of the fascist parties. The good citizenship of the Hungarian Jews was not a sensitive barometer: on the contrary, it deceived them to believe in enduring guaranteed security. The comparative leniency of Horthy and his circle was partially due to the consideration that the large number of Jews in Hungary - 800,000 among 14 million Hungarian in contrast to 600,000 Jews among 60 million Germans<sup>27</sup> - and their vital role in economic life made the application of the Nazi approach to the Jewish question tantamount to economic suicide.<sup>28</sup> The assimilationist patriotism of Hungarian Jews - who called themselves "Magyars of the Israelite faith" - made them support the White terror, and object with the rest of the country to the Trianon borders. It led them to applaud Mussolini and his invasion of Ethiopia, to exalt in the "achievements" of the two Vienna awards.<sup>29</sup> Heartened by the relative economic prosperity, they tried to ignore the social non-acceptance and mitigate the import of the emanating hatred. In the increasingly antisemitic atmosphere they kept proving staunch loyalty to Hungary, and everything Hungarian. This was sadly ironic since historical Jewish allegiance to Hungary was more than amply demonstrated. It was for instance manifest in the bizarre example of the Jews in the Succession States, who, neglecting not only their own interest but the traditional Diaspora principle of support to the law of the land, remained strongly Hungarian and played a powerful role in the maintenance of Hungarian political parties, culture and press. Newspaper articles in Czechoslovakia were complaining that the Hungarian Jews, in spite of being fluent in Slovakian, kept speaking in Hungarian, and "would not belong".<sup>30</sup> As late as the Munich crisis, Slovak leaders wanted to exclude the Jews from a planned plebiscite, because they would vote for Hungary.<sup>31</sup>

26 ITELJETEK! NEHANY KIRAGADOTT LAP A MAGYAR ZSIDO ELETKOZOSSEG KONYVEBOL (You Judge! Few Pages Torn from the Book of *Hungarian-Jewish Life Together*) 63 (M Vida ed. Budapest 1939)

27 Laszlo, *Hungary's Jewry, a Demographic Overview, 1918-1945*, in (Braham ed.) 2 HUNGARIAN JEWISH STUDIES 137-182.

28 THE HOLOCAUST IN HUNGARY AN ANTHOLOGY OF JEWISH RESPONSE 21 (A. Handler ed. U. of Alabama Press 1982).

29 Simon Hevesi, chief Rabbi wrote in 1941, "Ima" (Prayer): "I believe that Though has worked wonders with Hungary, our beloved nation... Praised be Thou O Lord for restoring to our Nation the lands that had been taken from her." Reprinted in Handler, *id.* at 33

30 Quoted from the newspaper *Trencanska Noviny* in Marton, *supra* note 26, at 56.

31 C.A. MACARTNEY, OCTOBER FIFTEENTH - A HISTORY OF MODERN HUNGARY 1929-1945, Vol. 1,



The rationale for foreign and internal policies in the Horthy years was determined by the tunnel-vision symptomatic already in the 1920s. The source of all problems, economic and social were simply put down to two causes. For all the outside ills the Entente Powers were blamed and for internal problems the "alien" - the Jews. The two were easily fused by accusations of conspiracy between the Hungarian Jews and the Western democracies. Accordingly, the foreign policy<sup>32</sup> pursued was alliance with Germany and Italy on geo-strategical lines, and instead of much needed economic or social reforms irredenta and antisemitic propaganda and policies were cultivated. This further opened the way to fascist influence.

The rise of fascism was not a solely indigenous development in Hungary. There was considerable German propaganda coming through political, economic and ideological channels. As it was already asserted, the Horthy regime functioned as a pluralistic system of competing groups, who while formed into an uneasy coalition struggled against each other. The Szeged men, the officers of the special squads, the perpetrators of the White terror, were either part of the governing political élite, or members of the burgeoning parties and societies, or - as in the case of Gombos - both. Coinciding with N.S.D.A.P. electoral victories, Gombos became prime minister in 1932. An ardent admirer of Hitler, he was the first head of government to visit Germany after Hitler became Chancellor. The two countries promptly signed an economic agreement, the essence of which was Hungarian agricultural export to Germany and import of goods needed for rearmament and modernisation. Hungary depended on Germany for technical and industrial supplies and over the years the economic tie strengthened considerably to include - amongst other things - raw materials as well. There was also a rapid increase of German investment capital.<sup>33</sup> With the support of Germany, by the late 1930s Hungary was engaged in a massive rearmament program. The economic relationship was accompanied by a penetration of many Nazi sponsored organisations. Propaganda was disseminated to the Swabian<sup>34</sup> minority and just as importantly to Hungarians, susceptible anyway through the Germanophile strands in Hungarian culture. Thus the Christian-national principle was further infiltrated by *volkish* ideas, through the half-assimilated Germans living in Hungary. Gombos, during the years of his premiership substantively modified the balance of power towards Germany. By the mid-1930s the various fascist factions were exerting more and more influence. This was not solely due to the good offices of Gombos utilising his premiership, although it was a major factor. It also reflected the intensifying responsiveness to fascist ideas of a morally eroding society, impressed by the Nazi and Fascist victories.

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229 (2nd. ed. Edinburgh 1961)

32 The geo-strategical foreign policy based its emotional appeal on irredentism and its ultimate justification were the two Vienna awards, Germany's "gift" to Hungary.

33 BRAHAM, *supra* note 13, at 54.

34 At the end of the eighteenth century, after the liberation of Hungary from the 150 years of Turkish rule, Maria Theresa invited Swabians to settle in Hungary.

The radicalisation of the army towards the right was an ominous phenomenon. Officers of the national army and the *Ludovika* military academy were getting exceedingly indoctrinated by extremist political ideology. Many were members of the secret societies. The participation of military persons in civil administration started in the days of Gombos. The army was also getting involved in the training of students at secondary schools and universities. As the army was becoming increasingly fanatical it started to propagate national socialist solutions in both internal and external politics. The main aims were military-political cooperation with Germany and rearmament and were peppered with some racialist and social reforms.<sup>35</sup> Prime minister Daranyi, who himself was also a "tribal leader" in one of the secret societies, gave in to army pressure and announced a program of massive rearmament. These measures were further developed as the vociferousness of the fascist parties was growing.

The extreme-right radical parties and societies took advantage of the ambivalence of the conservative Government party. This co-existence of numerous fascist organisations and policies, leaders and diverse theories, sometimes simply copying Nazism or Fascism, fighting and competing with each other, constituted an important characteristic of the Horthy era. Corresponding to the patriotic groups in Bavaria, there were the over 10,000 secret and semi-secret associations during the early 1920s.<sup>36</sup> These political organisations had structural characteristics that were sometimes simply inherited from the traditional monarchical bureaucracy, but mostly they were still a far cry from the Hitlerite forms. The operation of secret societies, the conspiratorial character of early Nazism, was an integral part of both the White terror and the Constitutional protofascism. The various groups of the counter-revolutionary movement shared common organisations. The secret societies and patriotic association were more or less loyal to the Regent in the years to come, with the influence of Gombos becoming stronger and stronger until 1936, the time of his death.

The oldest and one of the most ferocious of these organisations was MOVE. Its president was Gombos, who had to some extent united the various national socialist currents in Hungary. During the Bethlen years he wrote pamphlets on international Jewry and founded the new Party of Racial Defence. He forged the social program of the radical Right from Agrarianism and the *Keresztesy Kurzus* (Christian Course), fused with ultra-chauvinistic nationalism and rabid antisemitism. Gombos made good use of the proliferating para-military organisations. After Gombos' death, as MOVE was disarmed and paralysed, the organisational centre of rightist dynamism shifted to Szalasi and the Arrow Cross party. Szalasi was a former officer. He believed he had a mission to save Hungary, and by emphasising the proletarian

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35 In a memorandum submitted to the Regent in 1938, the army demanded measures to reduce Jewish influence in the press, in cultural life and in economic activities. Most peculiar was the demand for increased taxation and control of the big firms and "juster distribution of land" along with measures to protect the poorer classes. MACARTNEY, *supra* note 31, at 213.

36 BRAHAM, *supra* note 13, at 21.

character of his movement he won the support of the poorer classes. A devout Catholic, he showed concern about the welfare of the dispossessed lower classes although his ruthlessness and violence even in the methods of propaganda went beyond the more irredentist aims of the other parties. Szalasi's dream was a "Danubian Carpathian Great Fatherland" and he ranted about "Turanian Christianity". The Arrow Cross party was the only fascist movement with a large mass-support.<sup>37</sup> It infiltrated the army and also had a high proportion of convicted criminals, even if convictions for political offences are discounted.<sup>38</sup> There were fascist organisations<sup>39</sup> which had anti-German tendencies like the Order of the Brave established in 1920 by Horthy, loyal to him.

Officially condoned antisemitism, as one of the fundamental psychological pillars of frustrated, revenge-oriented nationalism, had a tremendous appeal to students and to clerks, to officers and to workers, to grocers and to gentry and led them to join the proliferating ultra-right parties. There were many variations on the theme to choose from. The various forms of hatred these societies indulged in galvanised the otherwise apathetic society, lending it a feeling of energy, sense of purpose and of importance. Anti-liberalism, another classical symptom of fascism, fuelled partly by the hatred of the Entente powers and partly by the fear of communism, like in Germany, also increased the susceptibility of the masses. The fascists succeeded more and more in making a favourable impression on the gentry. Unmitigated chauvinism blinded those who would have been otherwise troubled by signs of barbarism. The lenient, somewhat absent-minded antisemitism of Horthy and the upper classes generated an atmosphere from which it was not such a huge step towards active, Nazi-style Jew-hatred and open fascism.

The ideological platform of the 1930s was the Christian national principle. The very name showed the importance of Christian as opposed to socialist ideas, and that it was not an ideology. Prevalent in Bethhlen's Christian National party, apart from the ideals stated in its name, it also propagated the rejection of communism and left-wing socialism, and of pacifism. The extremists were willing to form alliances with Berlin or Rome and did not find that inconsistent with Hungarian national interests. Although they shared some policies, the aristocratic-gentry dominated anti-revolutionaries were against any kind of reform and viewed the radical right-wingers with gentlemanly distaste and

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37 In 1940 the social composition of the membership included 13 percent who were peasants, 36 percent middle class, nearly half army officers. The top leadership were professional counterrevolutionaries of lower-middle class origin. Eros, *supra* note 11, at 137.

38 M. LACKO, NYILASOK, NEMZETISZOCIALISTAK, 1935-1944 (Arrow Cross Men, National Socialists, 1935-1944) (Kossuth 1969).

39 Another, the "Association of Turanian Hunters" were really an amalgamation of shooting clubs. The name Turanian was an allusion to the "racial" origins of the ancestors of the Hungarians and did carry an anti-German connotation, because in legendary times the Turanians and the Aryans were fighting epic battles. These societies were so strongly anti-German that they were ready to use their weapons against the Hungarian Nazis or even against the invading German army. But the call never came. Horthy, hesitant and by then thoroughly confused by his own contradictory policies, submitted to the Germans without armed resistance in March 1944, Eros, *supra* note 11, at 142.

distrust.<sup>40</sup> Even when Gombos became premier Horthy made him commit himself to certain moderate positions, and measures were taken to limit his freedom of action. (In keeping with this spirit he publicly renounced his own antisemitism, not that he meant it.) Along the lines of the semi-liberal tendencies, moderate agrarian and electoral reforms were introduced during the 1930s. Apart from occasionally outlawing some of the right-radical parties and sometimes arresting some more offensive leaders,<sup>41</sup> constitutional safeguards were strengthened to try to curtail the preponderance of the Right-radical elements in Parliament. The anti-Jewish legislation could be - and was by many<sup>42</sup> - perceived as an attempt to take the wind out of the sails of the Nazi movement by restricting the part played by Jews in professional and economic life. This ambivalence was also apparent for instance in the reaction to a bomb outrage on a Budapest synagogue on the eve of the second anti-Jewish legislation. Under martial law the terrorists were tried - and the parliamentary debate continued on the Bill. The heads of Christian churches who were sitting in the upper house supported both anti-Jewish laws. The only objection raised was against the inclusion of baptised Jews; they protested to "rejudaification". The Catholic high clergy, being part of the landowner class, supported the conservative front whilst their mass base was being undermined by the fascist propaganda.

The contradictory policies of the ruling classes in what they called the "Jewish question", the increasing influence of Nazi ideology and the vehemence of the ludicrous "defenders of the Hungarian race" were reverberated in the rapidly changing face of traditional Hungarian antisemitism.<sup>43</sup> From the primitive aversion of the peasantry and social ostracism by the gentry, it was going towards violent hatred. The attitude towards drastic "removal", the murder of Jews, was stretching to accommodate more and more, from unconcern through glee to active participation. Nationalism was incorporating antisemitism. Blending the heathen Hungarian past with Christianity, romanticism with mystical chauvinism, produced a peculiar mythological trait of Hungarian Christianity. The word "Christian" took on a meaning more of antisemitism than of brotherly love. Hungary was held to be a bastion of Christianity, devoted to the defence of traditional Christian values against atheistic communism, deceitful capitalism and of course against the Jews who were behind both. The agrarian character of Hungary with its provincialism augmented the rise of the populist spirit, the counterpart of volkishness. Populism, a vital ingredient of Central European fascism, held up the village and peasants as symbols

40 Not unlike the butcher's daughter who goes for a walk while they kill the pig and is genuinely shocked at the sight of her father's bloodstained apron, but sits down to the finely set table to eat the roast.

41 Szalasi, the head of the Arrow Cross party, was several times arrested; the Scythe Cross party's leader and eighty followers were tried and imprisoned, and later, like the Hungarist party, it was dissolved in the 1930s.

42 ROYAL INSTITUTE, *supra* note 15, at 66.

43 Hungarian antisemitism had two paradigmatic manifestations in the latter part of the nineteenth century. One was the Tiszaeszlar blood-libel, and the other Istoczy's antisemitic campaign in and out of parliament.

of honesty and sanity. With its re-identification of the people and exaggeration of tradition, incorporating antisemitism, it preached a process of renewal and was influential with Hungarian writers and intellectuals.

The Szeged Idea, the Christian National principle, the Christian Course, Szalasi's Hungarianism and others, were variations on a theme. They used antisemitism, nationalism, irredentism, and Christianity as threads to weave their own patterns varied by policies and the level of brutality they found justifiable. These were the main ideals echoing throughout the Horthy years, corrupting foreign and internal politics, economic planning, penetrating cultural life, contaminating entertainment and jokes, manifest in novels, newspapers and plays. They were more than respectable; they became socio-political *bona mores*.

The complex, contradictory profile of Hungarian fascism developed through some characteristic specificities. Being predetermined by a different cultural, historical and socio-economic background, vital components of fascism, like nationalism and antisemitism, had national attributes. Fascism in Hungary never really found one leader who could have congealed all the parties into one around whom fascists and sympathisers could have rallied. It existed so to speak by default, without an ideologist to develop an ideology acceptable to all. Another important leitmotif was an aggressive Christianity ingrained in all forms of Hungarian fascism - in contrast to the "heathen" rituals and ritual secularism of Nazism. Hungarian protofascism in the 1930s, unlike Nazism which still incorporated socialist ideals, was not anti-capitalist and in some ways even allowed and cultivated limited liberalism. Instead of wanting to conquer the world, lacking the ideology of Lebensraum, Hungarian fascism confined itself to the irredenta aims of re-establishing the status-quo ante Trianon. Germany being an industrially well-developed country looked at the whole world, while provincial and semi-feudal agricultural Hungary, using an expressive proverb, only wanted to rule the local dungheap. In Hungary "legality" and operating within parliamentary forms was an intrinsic part of political life. While Nazism both as an ideology and as a form of government was anti-parliamentary, Hungarian fascism was largely acted out within a constitutional framework.

In the years after the war both countries experienced similar and even analogous events but the reactions were different. Much less developed capitalism, a backward economy and a corresponding social structure and culture, produced attitudes, politics and ideology peculiar to Hungary. In Germany fascism was a movement, a mass-force and by the 1930s in power. In the Hungary of the same decade it was a kind of musak - an ambience that pervaded social thinking, values and awareness, and set political perimeters.