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# **Terrorists and freedom fighters. Arrow Cross Party Militias, "Ragged Guard" and "KISKA" Auxiliary Forces in Hungary (1938–1945)**

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## **Abstract**

This study analyzes the correlations of three Hungarian right-wing organizations between 1938 and 1945 focusing on a political party (Arrow Cross Party), a paramilitary unit ("Ragged Guard") and a military auxiliary force (KISKA). After clarifying the meaning of key-word *racialism*, the paper aims to show the origins, the similarities, the differences, and the transitions of these organizations interpreting their connections to political violence and their different approaches to the German-led "New Europe".

## **Keywords**

political violence – far-right extremism – Second World War – Anti-Nazi resistance – Horthy Era – Arrow Cross rule

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## Introduction

It has been known for a long time that the Hungarian interwar right was a more complex phenomenon,<sup>1</sup> than it had been for decades presented in the post-war era.<sup>2</sup> Studies from the last few years also convincingly argued that the continuity between the two major waves of far right movements in Hungary was not a necessary tendency, thus many post-war right-wing extremists of 1919 continued their career in Anti-Nazi political parties and organizations, instead of joining Pro-Nazi formations.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, even the Hungarian right wing had an Anti-Nazi platform during World War 2.<sup>4</sup> The fragmentation of the Hungarian right-wing radicalism came from different reasons. Naturally personal aspects cannot be overlooked, albeit differences were deeper than rivalries of different "factions" and egocentric leaders.<sup>5</sup> It is no less important that the Hungarian right wing was neither unified concerning the relation to the German-led "New Europe", nor to the state ideology of Nazi Germany. It resulted that many rightists participated in the resistance in 1944.<sup>6</sup>

The present study analyzes the correlations of three characteristic (originally) right-wing organizations between 1938 and 1945, aiming to show their similarities, differences, transitions and also their connections to various forms of political violence such as street atrocities, paramilitary activities, war and terrorism.<sup>7</sup> As we will see, some of these organizations were purely terrorist groups of the Hungarian political underworld, while others can be described as Anti-Nazi freedom fighters. But confusingly, most of them can be put in both categories. Among the analysed groups a far-right political party (Arrow Cross Party, ACP), a paramilitary unit ("Ragged Guard", RG) and a military auxiliary force (KISKA) can be found. Therefore, our exploration can give us the opportunity to see how politics and personal contacts could form different kinds of organizations and how these organizations change during the altering circumstances. My paper is based on recent literature but also on a vast array of archive materials and press sources.

1 For details, see Juhász, G.: *Uralkodó eszmék*.

2 "From the end of the Second World War, through most of the socialist era, politics in the era of Admiral Miklós Horthy, from 1919 until 1944, was described as »Horthy fascism«". Pittaway, M.: *From the Vanguard*, p. 257. Currently, most historians interpret Horthy system (1919–1944) as a rule of an authoritarian regime. Bodó, B.: *Faith*, pp. 171–172.

3 Gyurgyák, J.: *Magyar fajvédők*. Paksa, R.: *Magyar nemzetiszocialisták*.

4 For the National Association of the Turan Hunters, see Ablonczy, B.: *Go East!*, pp. 153–156. Concerning the National Association of the Hungarian Racialists: Szentkirályi, G.: *A Rongyos Gárda története*.

5 Lackó, M.: *Arrow-cross men*, pp. 79–83.

6 For more examples: Bartha, Á.: *Véres város*.

7 For a modern definition of political violence and terrorism, see Miller, M. A.: *The Foundations*, pp. 1–9. The contemporary (1937) interpretation made by the League of Nations defines terrorism as "all criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or groups of persons in the general public." Cited and used by Brunelle, G. K.–Finley-Croswright, A.: *Murder in the Métro*, p. 3.

## Racialism and the racialists

To understand the Hungarian Anti-German far right, a short terminological note is needed first aiming to clarify the exact meaning of the important key-word *racialism* ("fajvédelem"). Racialism is a phrase which is usually discussed concerning the first decade of the Horthy-regime in Hungary,<sup>8</sup> however, ten years later, at the end of the thirties the phenomenon returned to the public arena (from where it has never disappeared completely).<sup>9</sup> Racialism needs to be distinguished from *racism* which is always based on strict biologism. The simplest example is the Nazism, of course, wherein blood played a central role ("Blut und Boden"). By contrast, Hungarian racialists – in other words: "race defenders" – considered race mostly as a product of history and culture, although they used biological metaphors, and their phrasing was not consistent. Racialists discriminated against Jews and propagated the Magyarization of the economic and social life, but their ideologists refused Nazi-style legislation. They were hard-liner revisionists who wanted to re-annex all the territories which had been lost in the Trianon Treaty (1920) for Hungary.<sup>10</sup> During the thirties, many of their leaders (and voters) found their places in the new-established Hungarian fascist or national socialist parties, but not all of them.

First-line politicians like Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky (1886–1944),<sup>11</sup> publicists like István Lendvai (1888–1945)<sup>12</sup> and writers like Dezső Szabó (1879–1945)<sup>13</sup> refused the ideology of the new far right. They both propagated a kind of „total racialism” against “outlander” ideologies like Bolshevism and Nazism, but also against ethnic groups, like Jewry and later Germans in Hungary. Their “authentic Hungarian” worldview was based on history and geopolitics. Hungarian Anti-Nazi racialists idolized the Hungarian Kingdom of the Middle Ages and considered it as an example for the contemporary small Hungary to follow. At the same time, they conceptualized racialism as a defensive ideology for the Hungarian “race”, which is threatened by the “traditional” Slavic and German

<sup>8</sup> Miklós Horthy (1868–1957) took over the power in Hungary in Autumn, 1919 establishing an anti-revolutionary rightist regime. Horthy served as a Regent from 1. March 1920 until 16. October 1944, when, followed by his unsuccessful attempt to exit Hungary from the war, he let ACP to come into power under the pressure of the German occupiers.

<sup>9</sup> Bartha, Á: *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre*, pp. 311–319.

<sup>10</sup> „The Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920, reduced the area of Hungary from 329,000 square kilometers or, discounting Croatia, from 282,000 square kilometers to 93,000 square kilometers; while the country's population dropped from 20.8 million (or 18.2 million) to 7.9 million. Out of a total of 10.6 million people in the detached lands, 3.3 million or 30.2% were ethnic Hungarians (Magyars).” Romsics, I.: *A Trianonhoz vezető út*, s. 727.

<sup>11</sup> Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Endre (1886–1944): Hungarian racialist politician and journalist; a leading figure in the Hungarian independence movement. He was executed by the Hungarian pro-Nazis on Christmas Day, 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Lendvai, István (1888–1945): Hungarian racialist politician and journalist (alias „Nomád”), who was executed in the very end of the ACP dictatorship. Veszprémy, L. B.: *A másik Lendvai*, pp. 185–203.

<sup>13</sup> Szabó, Dezső (1879–1945): a high-impact racialist writer who died during the siege of Budapest. His famous novel, *Az elszödort falu* (*The Swept Away Village*, 1919), “celebrated the ancestral vigour of the peasantry and castigated the town for its corrupting influence”. Szegedy-Maszák, M.: *The Age of Bourgeois Society*, p. 212.

"imperialism", namely by the Soviet Union and the Third Reich from the 1930s. Thus, albeit race defenders were imperialists themselves and they aimed to build a new central European Hungarian Empire, "total racialism" can be labelled as an anti-Imperialist worldview. The main discrepancy of this approach was that Anti-Nazi racialists, like most of the Hungarians, welcomed the returned territories of the end of the thirties and in the beginning of the forties,<sup>14</sup> although these goals were achieved due to the cooperation with Nazi Germany.

At this point, a brief ideological comparison of fascism and racialism seems to be important since – as Constantin Iordachi outlined – fascist movements and regimes should be more profoundly differentiated and isolated from non-fascist radical right which "cannot be fully captured by static ideal-type definitions."<sup>15</sup> In our case many obvious common points can be identified. Both fascists and racialists – who were impressed by the success of Mussolini – were motivated by a "fanatical belief in the urgent need" to mobilize to "regenerate the organically conceived nation or race so that it can be saved from a state of existential threat and decadence in which it finds itself. Only then can it enter, imminently or eventually, a heroic phase of demographic health, cultural creativity, military strength, civilizational greatness and faith in the immortality of the nation/race." Nevertheless, while fascists wanted "to realize the utopia of a total »new order«",<sup>16</sup> non-fascist radical rightists "hesitated to embrace totally radical and novel forms of authoritarianism".<sup>17</sup> Hungarian Anti-Nazi racialists considered the (idealized) national tradition a pattern to follow and did not like strict theories. Partly that was the reason why they hated not only the communist but also the Nazi totalitarianism in accordance with their geopolitical visions and with their continuous anxiety about imperial expansions. For example, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, who used his gun against the invaders on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1944, in his national characteristic essay (*Beitrag zur Characterologie des ungarischen Volkes*) which was written in German captivity in 1944, emphasized freedom and autonomies as the most important motifs of the Hungarian nation.<sup>18</sup>

After the Anschluss (12 March 1938), when Hungary became a neighbour of the German Reich, "total racialism" started to become well organized in Hungary. Without aiming to give an exhaustive list, the following organizations need to be mentioned: Hungarian Fraternal Community [HFC, "Magyar Testvéri Közössége"], National Association of the Hungarian Racialists [NAHR, "Magyar Fajvédők Országos Szövetsége"], True-Born Hungarians [TBH, "Törzsökös Magyarok"], National Association of Turan Hunters [NATH, "Turáni Vadászok Országos Egyesülete"], Ragged Guard [RG, "Rongyos Gárda"], National Side [NS, "Nemzeti Tábor"], Association of National Defence (AND, "Nemzetvédelmi Szövetség"), Combatant Association (CA, "Tűzharcos Szövetség"). Sooner or later, all these rightist parties and organizations turned against the Nazi Germany. Some

<sup>14</sup> Between 1938 and 1941 the southern part of the "Uplands", Subcarpathia, Northern Transylvania and Vojvodina were reannexed by Hungary.

<sup>15</sup> Iordachi, C.: *Fascism in Southeastern Europe*, p. 466.

<sup>16</sup> Griffin, R. – Iordachi, C.: *Fascism*, p. 556, 550.

<sup>17</sup> Payne, S. G.: *A History of Fascism*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Bartha, Á.: *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre*, pp. 452–453.

of them – NATH, AND, CA – became Anti-Nazi only in the final stages of the war, after the Voronezh defeat (January, 1943),<sup>19</sup> while others were established as rivals of the German-loyal ACP in 1938 (NAHR, TBH) or in 1940 (NS). One of the key players of the official support they enjoyed was count Pál Teleki (1879–1941), Prime Minister of Hungary between February 1939 and April, 1941. Teleki tried to combine pacific revisionist aims and the independence of the country encouraging rightist Anti-Nazi organizations, parties, and campaigns to divide his right-wing opposition. However, it was not an easy manoeuvre to keep the goodwill of Berlin for regaining territories on one hand, and being out of war, on the other. Finally, Teleki committed suicide under the pressure of the Yugoslav crisis in April 1941.<sup>20</sup>

Racialist associations were often intertwined with each other. For example, the NAHR published *Sorakozó* ("Lining up"), a journal issued by the Anti-German Ragged Guardsmen. This paramilitary unit, the RG, was established originally at the beginning of the Horthy era. They participated in Anti-Semitic pogroms as perpetrators and fought against the Austrian forces at the Western borders in 1921, enjoying an implicit support of the Hungarian government.<sup>21</sup> RG interpreted later their activity here as "a new freedom fight".<sup>22</sup> By the time of the political consolidation in the 1920s, many RG members used their knowledge in the regular armed forces like gendarmerie, police, or army. Some of them were involved in secret sabotage corps and later, in the 1930s became special agents of the 5<sup>th</sup> Department of the Homeland Defence Force General Staff ("honvéd vezérkar főnöke", commonly known as "vkf."). This department was responsible for reactivating RG once the government decided to launch subversive warfare.<sup>23</sup>

## Free corps – free glory

It needs to be underlined that neither the ruling "National Union Party" (NUP) nor the government was unified concerning the ideal relations with the Nazi Germany. Many NUP MP-s wanted to achieve the mentioned two goals (revision *with* independency) and control the strengthened new Hungarian national socialist right wing. These intentions can be realized when NAHR was allowed to be established and started propagating the cult of RG. Raggards had a strong government connection already in 1919–1921 and their implicit Anti-German attitude was proved by the fight for Burgenland (1921), which was presented by the far-right press as a part of the century-long Anti-Habsburg ("kuruc") independent struggle.<sup>24</sup> The fears of the big neighbour were easily revived after the

19 In January 1943, the 2nd Hungarian army suffered very grave losses on the Eastern Front near the Don River.

20 Ablonczy, B.: *Pál Teleki*, pp. 165–235.

21 More recently, see Bodó, B.: *Antisemitic and Political Violence*.

22 For a memoir, see Sorakozó, 12. May 1939, p. 5.

23 Pócs, N.: *Varjúsereg*, pp. 74–83. *Vallomások a holtak házából*, pp. 343, 554, 525–526 and 520. and Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, Budapest (= ÁBTL), A-1251/1.

24 A Nép, 4. January 1922, p. 6. Szózat, 12. October 1923, p. 7.

Anschluss (1938). Many RG members hated not only the Slovaks, Romanians, and Jews, but also the Germans, therefore they had serious conflicts with the German minority organizations. From the end of the 1930s, RG acted against Volksbund, the newly established "völkisch" association of the Germans in Hungary. Volksbund and RG members (or other similar Hungarian nationalist groups) clashed in the streets in several cases, especially in the Transdanubian countryside where more than one hundred thousand German-origin inhabitants lived.<sup>25</sup>

In 1938 Hitler decided to systematically dismember the multiethnic state of Czechoslovakia where significant Hungarian minority populations lived.<sup>26</sup> RG were reorganized and engaged in the "Uplands" as a Horthy-loyal militia among the free corps. These armed free corps had very heterogeneous social and political background. As desperate and fanatic nationalists, all their members wanted to fight for the historical borders of Hungary, but not in the same way. There were a huge number of Nazi-sympathizers, followers of ACP among them. This came from the fact that 1938–1939 was the "high time" of ACP when the radicals became the dominant oppositionist formation in the Hungarian Parliament.<sup>27</sup> Arrow cross sympathizers ("hungarists"<sup>28</sup>) and other pro-Nazi formations in Hungary considered these sabotage actions abroad an opportunity to demonstrate their power, moreover, there was a widespread rumour that they were preparing to come into power violently, using the weapons they received from the government. Even a right-wing radical Széchenyi count decided to join them,<sup>29</sup> in the company of many prominents of the party.<sup>30</sup> The main organizer of ACP, Kálmán Hubay, who was the deputy of the imprisoned party leader, Ferenc Szálasi,<sup>31</sup> stated that "almost 80%" of the participants of the free corps were "hungarists".<sup>32</sup> This number seems to be unrealistically high, but some Arrow Cross dominated units were really disarmed, and the loudest troublemakers were sent back to Budapest due to the anti-government propaganda they made.<sup>33</sup> The dangerous situation was clear for the political leader of

<sup>25</sup> Nagy, Á.: *Fordulóponton*, p. 378. ÁBTL O-11803/18. Bartha, Á.: *Ellenállás és elhallgatás*, pp. 666–669. In August, 1939 RG participated in a demonstration in the company of NAHR, TBH and NATH against Volksbund and the völkisch ideology in Paks, in a town in Tolna county. The heated situation can be illustrated by the press which discussed "the war in Paks" in long articles. 8 Órai Ujság, 13. August 1939, p. 7.; Az Est, 8. August 1939, pp. 5–6.; Pesti Hirlap, 8. August 8 1939, p. 7. Magyar Nemzet, 8. August 8 1939, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> For more data: *Minority Hungarian Communities*, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> Ormos, M.: *Hungary in the Age*, p. 351.

<sup>28</sup> For ACP ideology ("hungarism") in details: Szele, Á.: *The Arrow Cross*, pp. 81–133.

<sup>29</sup> Lajos Széchenyi became an MP a few months later. *Parliamentary Almanac*, p. 319.

<sup>30</sup> *Rendőrségi célereszben a szélsőjobb*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>31</sup> Szálasi, Ferenc (1897–1946), former officer of the general staff, leader and ideologist of ACP. When Hitler brought ACP to power on 16. October 1944 Szálasi became the head of the Hungarian State as "nemzetvezető". In 1946 he was sentenced to death and executed. In details: Paksa, R.: *Szálasi Ferenc*. Szálasi's parties had been banned in several times and then it was re-established with different names. For simplicity, I use their most common name (ACP) in this paper.

<sup>32</sup> Magyarság, 4. August 1939, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Hornyák, C.: *A kárpátaljai akció*, p. 9.

the campaign, Miklós Kozma,<sup>34</sup> who was the president of the Hungarian News Agency.<sup>35</sup> Kozma knew that free corps are an ally of the government, led by Béla Imrédy<sup>36</sup> at this time, to attain the revisional aims on one hand, but they meant a threatening risk for the regime on the other. Finally, free corps infiltrated into southern Czechoslovakia and Ruthenia as guerrillas from October 1938, just before the First Vienna Award (2 November 1938) which returned 12 000 km<sup>2</sup> for Hungary. They were saboteurs who tried to prepare the Hungarian territorial revision. During these actions they damaged the local infrastructure, fought both with the Czechoslovak forces and the Ukrainian Sich Guards, furthermore, insulted and killed inhabitants, mostly Jews.<sup>37</sup>

After the "Upland" campaign an intense rivalry begun between the German-loyal and the Anti-German veterans for the glory. Since "RG brand" was widely known to be attached to the Anti-German NAHR by this time, Arrow Cross veterans tried to detach the "so called" RG from the armed conflict describing them as a well-funded political organization of the government. At the same time, RG blamed hungarists for cowardice and threatened them with physical aggression.<sup>38</sup> NAHR's combative periodical was a forum for those who considered not only the minorities and the smaller ambient countries, but also the "German Reich" as a danger for the Hungarian "total racialism". Sorakozó published articles about the German colonial politics in Europe as well as the "Jewish infiltrations" to Hungary, at the time of the Hungarian Anti-Jewish legislation.<sup>39</sup> ACP's paper, *Magyarság* ("Magyars") wrote similarly about the detested Jewry, but they propagated a much more realistic foreign policy – on the side of Germany.

Thus, very soon a symbolic struggle emerged around József Rozs, a free corps volunteer who had been born in a peasant family and died in the battle of Munkács, at the beginning of 1939. Rozs received a military funeral assisted by NAHR and with a speech of Kálmán Zsabka, a prominent Anti-German RG leader.<sup>40</sup> Sorakozó discussed Rozs's bravery in details, publishing a horrific photo of the head-shot youngster on the same page.<sup>41</sup> However, Hubay later commemorated Rozs as a hungarist,<sup>42</sup> and that was true. Rozs had written a heated article in a small periodical just a couple of months before his death, where he had identified himself as a hungarist and due to his ardent writing the

<sup>34</sup> Kozma, Miklós (1884–1941): politician and president of the Hungarian News Agency; from 1935 to 1937 Minister of the Interior, between 1940 and 1941 the regent's commissioner of Subcarpathia.

<sup>35</sup> National Archives of Hungary (= HU MNL), Budapest, OL K 429 28. csomó, 1. dosszié (Kozma Miklós: „Kárpátalja visszavétele”), 8., 55–60.

<sup>36</sup> Imrédy, Béla (1891–1946): financial expert, politician, Pro-Nazi party leader in the first half of the 1940s. Imrédy was Minister of finance in 1932–1935, president of the Hungarian National Bank in 1935–1938 and prime minister in 1938–1939. After World War 2 he was condemned for war crimes and executed.

<sup>37</sup> See the documentation of the legal process initiated after 1945 against the perpetrators: Budapest City Archives, Budapest (= HU BFL) VII.5.e. 1949/21869. and Imrédy Béla a vádlottak padján, pp. 102–103. p. 233.

<sup>38</sup> Magyarság, 6. August 1939, p. 5.; Sorakozó, 11. August 1939, p. 8.; Magyarság, 15. August 1939, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Sorakozó, 25. February 1939, p. 5.; Sorakozó, 7. July 1939, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Magyar Nemzet, 13. January 1939, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Sorakozó, 25 February 1939, p. 3. See more: Székely Molnár, I.: *A Rongyos Gárda felvidéki*, p. 454.

<sup>42</sup> Parliamentary Diary (= PD) 1939–1944. no. 1. p. 395. (August 2, 1939.)

newspaper was banned.<sup>43</sup> Rozs personally had been accused, inter alia, with “derogating the honour of the Hungarian state and nation”.<sup>44</sup> However, this uncomfortable part of his past was promptly forgotten by the government after his heroic self-devotion. Kozma named Rozs’ last fight “an epos”,<sup>45</sup> and it is probably not a coincidence that this fight was commemorated as the first chapter of NAHR’s representative book about RG struggle in the “Upland”.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Rozs received a commemorative plaque and the highest possible military honour, the Hungarian Golden Medal of Bravery.<sup>47</sup> Both the hungarists, the RG and the government interpreted his death as a self-sacrifice to the nation – exactly like it happened in the case of the Romanian Ion Moța, or with the Croat Jure Francetić who “died for” the Iron Guard and the Ustaša state.<sup>48</sup>

## A main conspirator of “total racialism”

After the war, in the short coalitional era in Hungary, a group of Anti-German Raggeds hosted the Minister of Defence, Albert Bartha<sup>49</sup> in a restaurant for a discussion. „(...) most of these men stood by me already in 1939 and fought against the Germans” – introduced Kálmán Zsabka, the organizer of the meeting, his fellows to Bartha.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, these relations did not last long. After 1945, and especially following the formal communist takeover (1948), RG was considered as a homogenous “fascist terror organization” by the leftist parties.<sup>51</sup> The new state power demonstrated this interpretation with a legal process, a quasi show trial in 1948 initiated against 28 Raggeds. They were charged everything before with an Anti-Democratic underground conspiracy, but also with “terror activities and killings” committed in the “Upland” in 1938–1939.<sup>52</sup> The court blamed them in the spirit of the Danubian “socialist brotherhood” underlining that “these terrorists provoked conflicts between the Hungarian and the Czechoslovak folks”.<sup>53</sup> Murders, of which RG were primarily suspected in this case, have never been

<sup>43</sup> Rozs József: *Kend az Alvinczi...?* Vecsés és vidéke, 10. August 1938, p. 7. Rozs had been accused in a legal process initiated against Hungarian national socialists. *Magyar Országos Tudósító*, 2. September 1938. p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Magyarság, 3. September 1938, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> HU MNL OL K 429. Kozma Miklós. 29. csomó, 1. dosszié, p. 29. Diary of Miklós Kozma. (March 23, 1939.)

<sup>46</sup> „Egy rongyos”: *A rongyos gárda harcai*, pp. 16–29.

<sup>47</sup> Stenge, C. B.: *Fejezetek a Rongyos Gárda*, pp. 67–82.

<sup>48</sup> Iordachi, C.: *Fascism in Southeastern Europe*, p. 442.

<sup>49</sup> Bartha, Albert (1877–1960): military officer, commanding colonel, Smallholders’ Party politician and MP in 1945–1947. Bartha was served as Minister of Defence in 1918 (during the democratic revolution) and in 1946–1947. He emigrated from Hungary in 1948. *A Millennium of Hungarian*, p. 641.

<sup>50</sup> Agent Report, 9. September 1946. ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-7763 Zsabka Kálmán.

<sup>51</sup> Tamáska, P.: *Tacitusi szemmel*, pp. 123–127.

<sup>52</sup> Some of them were accused of demolishing graves and committing “similar terror activities”. *Magyar Országos Tudósító*, 12. June 1948, p. 8. Szabadság, 8. April 1948, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Szabad Nép, 18. November 1948, p. 2.

totally clarified.<sup>54</sup> However, one thing is clear: the communist jurisdiction and propaganda did not differentiate between Anti- or Pro-German attitudes; therefore, many guardsmen were imprisoned by both sides. Moreover, an Anti-Nazi guardist, Pál Gödér was sentenced to death in 1949.<sup>55</sup>

Kálmán Zsabka escaped from this danger as well. Zsabka represents a type of the society, those, who do not care too much about ideologies but participate in any troubles with pleasure. The Slovak origin troublemaker served both in the democratic (1918), the red (1919) and the white (1920–) militia and because the Horthy system has lasted 25 years his rightist period was the longest. In the interwar period he was a well-known right-wing activist, actor, poet, director, and producer, but he was also a leader of RG and the rightist student organization, Turul Association. As it was revealed later, he was also an informer of the police, working for the intelligence and for the "vkf". Zsabka became an officer in the mentioned special military group which reactivated RG and supervised free corps in 1938. He was a perfect choice due to his far-right relations, since in the middle of the thirties, he was a member of the Party of National Will, the first political force of Ferenc Szálasi.<sup>56</sup>

Zsabka was the main organizer of an unsuccessful attempt to help Poland just before the German invasion. By this time, in 1939, Hungarian foreign policy hesitated between a closer German alliance and the traditional Polish-Hungarian brotherhood. Finally, the government tried to have both irons in the fire.<sup>57</sup> In consequence, Hungary regained Subcarpathia in the middle of March 1939, on one hand, but the country kept out of the German attack on Poland in September, moreover, took masses of Polish refugees, on the other. Naturally, the Hungarian political forces were not uniform concerning this compromise. The German-loyal right wing wanted closer alliance with Berlin since Smallholder Party MP-s, Habsburg-loyal legitimists, conservatives, liberals, social democrats, and Anti-Nazi rightists were much more cautious about the German aggression.

Some Anti-German rightist radicals were not satisfied with verbal protests. In the beginning of July 1939 Zsabka led some of these volunteers through the newly created Polish-Hungarian border after a discussion with lieutenant colonel Jan Emisarski, the Polish military attaché in Budapest. Zsabka's group infiltrated to Śląsko and tried to relocate more than six hundred guardsmen from Hungary to Gdańsk cooperating with polish officers. The small Hungarian unit worked with the Polish military organization based in Sztrij,<sup>58</sup> a centre which had played an important role in operation Crowbar (in

<sup>54</sup> Guerrilla warfare activities, per se, "are not war crimes, crimes against humanities or grave breaches of humanitarian law". *The Routledge Handbook*, p. 84. Naturally, it is not the case with killing civilians. "Minor atrocities" committed on the "Uplands" were known even by the RG leaders. See, Szentkirályi, G.: *A Rongyos Gárda története*, pp. 108–111.

<sup>55</sup> Szabad Nép, 26. February 1949, p. 4. (Finally Gödér was not executed.)

<sup>56</sup> Bartha, Á. – Pócs, N. – Szécsényi, A.: *Egy hosszan „ébredő” I.*, p. 159 and 156.

<sup>57</sup> In details: Varga E., L.: *Jan Emisarski*, pp. 118–119.

<sup>58</sup> Agent report, 14. December 1954. ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-7763, pp. 305–306.

Polish: „Łom”) a couple of months earlier.<sup>59</sup> However, while Polish paramilitary corps were really engaged in Czechoslovakia in 1938, the second Polish–Hungarian secret action failed in July 1939. The conspiracy was leaked out and the Hungarian pro-Nazis made a huge scandal in the Parliament where Hubay shouted that “in Danzig Hungarian free corps have been set up against the Germans” (which was not true).<sup>60</sup> Zsabka named the “blames” “coward lies”<sup>61</sup> and declared he just had had a vacation in Poland with his mates.<sup>62</sup> The Arrow Cross press wanted to end the anxious polemics and Sorakozó was also not in the position to force an open conflict. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the Teleki-government introduced preliminary censorship, thus Sorakozó could pay tribute to the attacked Poland only with a map, invoking Anti-German historical Hungarian heroes.<sup>63</sup>

Probably, it was not the first time when Zsabka and Hubay were conflicted with each other. Hubay, the main organiser of ACP during Szálasi prison time, laid out the cult of the “Vezér” (~führer) who became the “martyr of the idea”.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, he removed “undisciplined” troublemakers and propagators of inconsistent ideologies from the party.<sup>65</sup> Exactly that was the case with Zsabka and his fellows who wanted to re-establish the historical Hungary without or against Germany,<sup>66</sup> following the Hungarian “kuruc” tradition of independency. However, Zsabka’s Anti-German attitude could not overwrite his hard-line Anti-Semitism. In July 1937, he appeared as a follower of László Endre, a pathological Jew hater right-wing politician, who later played a key role in the Hungarian holocaust.<sup>67</sup> Zsabka provoked the rival far-right radicals who attended Endre’s event, but this time he had no luck and was beaten bloody.<sup>68</sup>

## Hungarist violence before ACP rule

Brutalized street politics were not unusual in these years in Hungary, however it did not reach the level of Romania, where members of Iron Guard had assassinated two prime ministers, Ion G. Duca in 1933 and Armand Călinescu in 1939, before the guard-

59 In autumn, 1938 Poland provided armed support to Hungary aiming to fight out the common border together. B. Stenge, C.: *Lengyel diverziós műveletek*, p. 54.

60 PD 1939–1944. no. 1. p. 369. (1. August 1939.)

61 Esti Ujság, 6. August 1939, p. 5.

62 Magyar Nemzet, 3. August 1939, p. 4.

63 Magyarság, 6. August 1939, p. 1.; Sorakozó, 15. September 1939, p. 1.

64 Paksa, R.: *Magyart nemzetiszocialisták*, pp. 128–146.

65 Confession of Kálmán Hubay. October 16, 1945. HU BFL XXV.1.a 1946/865, Hubay Kálmán, p. 48.

66 Zsabka remembered his hungarist period with an enigmatic poem. Zsabka, K.: *Örök Tibor*, p. 59. („Csak azt szeretném” [I just would like...])

67 Endre, László (1895–1946): right-wing politician, administrative expert. In April 1944 he was appointed undersecretary of state of the Ministry of the Interior. Later, he served the ACP rule as a government commissioner. Endre was sentenced to death and executed after the war.

68 8 Órai Ujság, 11. July 1937, p. 3.

ists came into power in 1940.<sup>69</sup> In Hungary, albeit Szálasi continuously tried to gain the support of Horthy, ACP was basically also an anti-regime political formation with radical political, economic, and social targets. Similarly to the Romanian Legionaries, Hungarists preferred secret conspiracy and set up violent suborganizations. Many of these were dressed in uniforms not independently from Szálasi's officer past and the traditional image of right-wing radicalism, but the soldierly appearance was also able to demonstrate the violent plans of the party. A fanatic ACP board member, János Maczák created Party Defender Squad in the beginning of 1938. Maczák later took part in the paramilitary mission in the "Uplands" where he was captured and could return only due to a diplomatic intervention. The ambitious office-clerk had not spent a long time in Budapest. As someone who expected to be arrested, he escaped Wien in 1939 and formed "Szálasi Guard" to liberate Szálasi. The guard trained in "Ostmark" and started to collect equipment for their action. However, this attempt was unsuccessful: not only the Hungarian authorities but also the Germans kept their eyes on the conspiracy and main figures were arrested by Gestapo. Maczák had been released soon and went back to Budapest where he and his fellows were arrested again. Here, albeit the investigation brought to light that more than one thousand members were involved in this conspiracy which supposed to be aimed not only at freeing Szálasi but also at overthrowing the Horthy regime, the suspects received only minor sentences.

Ervin Tóth had a similar career like Maczák. After joining the Hungarian far right conspiracy in Wien he found himself very soon dressed in SA (*Sturmabteilung*) uniform as a member of the Sudeten German free corps which was fighting with the Czechs near Znojmo. In the middle of October 1938, Tóth had returned to Budapest where he was arrested and sentenced to a short imprisonment. After that he had fled to Linz where he was caught by Gestapo. The German authorities expelled him from the Reich in the beginning of 1940. Tóth then spent time in Yugoslavia and Italy before he returned to Hungary. Here, he joined Waffen-SS after the German occupation and then took apart in murders during ACP rule as a hungarist militiaman.<sup>70</sup>

The examples of Maczák and Tóth demonstrate that even if German Nazis used sometimes Hungarian far right extremists for their own aims, they did not risk diplomatic difficulties with the Hungarian government. Thus, Berlin did not support ACP by this time due to their decent relation with the Hungarian government. Budapest, at the same time, did not want to make new hungarist martyrs and sentenced the troublemakers only to a couple of months, at best, a few years.

While the above detailed plan remained on paper, many bloody incidents caused a stir in Budapest. One of the most famous assassinations linked to the Arrow Cross activists was a hand grenades attack against the Dohány Street synagogue on 3. February 1939.<sup>71</sup> According to the newest research, two people lost their lives later due to injuries

69 Iordachi, C.: *Fascism and Terrorism*, pp. 392–397.

70 Ervin Tóth was executed followed by a trial after the war. Máthé, Á.: *A nyilaskereszts árnyéka*, pp. 73–80 and 139–147.

71 Szöllösi-Janze, M.: *Die Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung in Ungarn*, p. 124.

caused by the attack and many more were wounded.<sup>72</sup> The Hungarian government declared martial law for armed crimes after the incident and the order was revoked only after the trial against the suspected perpetrators, in May.<sup>73</sup> The investigation resulted that the assassination can be linked to ACP and the liberal press discussed the assassins' hungarist relations before the trial in long articles (from police sources).<sup>74</sup> Finally, the suspected perpetrators were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in May.<sup>75</sup> The ACP press denied the rumours about their party's role in the assassination and considered it a political provocation before the elections. They thought that this anti-hungarist plan was conceived by the Teleki-government and organized by József Sombor-Schweinitzer, the deputy superintendent of police.<sup>76</sup> What is certain is that, on 21. February 1939 ACP got disbanded. It was justified partly by the mysterious "Black Front" which was branded by the Hungarian interior minister as a kind of illegal police of ACP established for investigations and "terrorist activities".<sup>77</sup> Actually, it was rather an internal unit lead by a retired gendarme colonel, Árpád Barcsay, who was responsible for monitoring ACP members and leaders.<sup>78</sup>

Controlling party discipline became a more and more serious task for ACP by this time. During World War 2 many disgruntled members left the party not independently from the government's intentions, the ancient method of "divide et impera". Szálasi lost his popularity due to the Hungarian government politics and later as the consequence of the continuous defeats of the German troops. In the first half of the forties, local atrocities between ACP members and their renegades often caused violent acts in the capital. „In a short time, serial terror incidents enriched the life of the [Arrow Cross] movement" – remembered the deputy commissioner of the Budapest police.<sup>79</sup> At the end of 1939 hard-line hungarists set up a "theory defender group" and terrorized their enemies. Lajos Gruber ACP MP was named in the liberal press as "the leader of the terrorists" which was quite an accurate statement.<sup>80</sup> When police found the correspondence of the members during a house-search, in one of the letters Ferenc Omelka volunteered himself as a "Cheka-chief" and warned his fellow, Antal Ostián that "the dead do not make counter-revolution".<sup>81</sup> From these words not only the internalized terrorist methods are relevant, but also its transnational dimensions. During the years of the Molotov–Ribben-

<sup>72</sup> Frojimovics Kinga: *Tényleg nem halt meg senki az 1939-es Dohány utcai merényletben?* <https://mult-kor.hu/tenyleg-nem-halt-meg-senki-az-1939-es-dohany-utcai-merenyletben-20161216?Idx=2>, cited: 9. 3. 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Vámoss, G.: *Kezdetben volt a gyűlölet*, p. 54.

<sup>74</sup> Esti Ujság, 18. February 1939, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Pesti Hirlap, 19. May 1939, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> The role of the police is still unclarified in this terror attack. Máthé, Á.: *A nyilaskereszt árnyéka*, pp. 98–99.

<sup>77</sup> PD 1935–1939, no. 22. p. 94. (1. March 1939.)

<sup>78</sup> Karsai, L.: *Szálasi Ferenc*, pp. 191–192 and 448.

<sup>79</sup> *Rendőrségi célereszben a szélsőjobb*, p. 91. For a brief contemporary summery of ACP conflicts with the Budapest police: HU BFL VI. 13.b Fegyelmi iratok 1920–1944. 155. doboz. VI.2.a.

<sup>80</sup> Esti Kurír, 6. March 1940, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Rendőrségi célereszben a szélsőjobb*, p. 91.

trop pact Hungarian Pro-Nazis kept their eyes not only on Berlin but also on Moscow.<sup>82</sup> ACP press turned down "Anti-Bolshevik" propaganda and showed understanding of the Soviet-Union, moreover they celebrated the "fascinating" career of Marshal Voroshilov, just after the signature of the pact.<sup>83</sup>

"Theory defenders" were mainly former ACP internees who not only suffered but also professionally used several forms of violence. They terrorized unknown renegades and famous politicians or notable writers as well, often kidnapping and torturing them with whips, batons, and other special devices. The focus of their activity was on the loyalty to the hungarist ideas. As they stated in the mentioned letter: "The »Vezér« [Szálasi - B. Á.] or Hubay cannot spend their time with insignificant dirty cases. These must be resolved by us."<sup>84</sup> Indeed, they attacked anybody who endangered ACP with denunciations, individual political aims or with articles. Therefore, an old-school Anti-German racialist journalist, István Lendvai and a real pioneer of the new far right, Zoltán Meskó<sup>85</sup> both can be found among their victims. Lendvai was attacked on 28. December 1939, while Meskó's insult happened on 3. January 1940. The perpetrator was the same hungarist butcher – a practiced wrestler – who punched them on the street after a careful preparation of the action.<sup>86</sup> The butcher, called Pál Tóth, was sentenced for nine months while Gruber was first had acquitted and then one year later was condemned to one year by the Curia.<sup>87</sup>

## The ACP state and the racialist resistance

In 1944–1945, Kálmán Hubay had taken part in the hungarist top bureaucracy and partly that was the reason why he was convicted by the People's Court after the war. The Arrow Cross organizer was sentenced to death and executed in Budapest on 26. June 1946. Kálmán Zsabka was the crown-witness in his legal process,<sup>88</sup> moreover Zsabka was nominated for a member of a certification committee in March 1945, which was a bit too much for the social democrat daily news.<sup>89</sup> How could all these happen? The answer

<sup>82</sup> About the pact, more recently, see Mitrovits, Miklós: *Background to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Legends and Facts*. Horizontok.hu. [http://horizontok.hu/en/2020/04/02/mitrovits-background-to-the-molotov-ribbentrop-pact-legends-and-facts/?fbclid=IwAR1jV9m-ivCG7saOvHo1a34BAFbbGBuS-MVsF7i\\_ySm-dJWQUV4mBFKwdmUY](http://horizontok.hu/en/2020/04/02/mitrovits-background-to-the-molotov-ribbentrop-pact-legends-and-facts/?fbclid=IwAR1jV9m-ivCG7saOvHo1a34BAFbbGBuS-MVsF7i_ySm-dJWQUV4mBFKwdmUY), cited: 9. 9. 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Sipos, B.: *Szorjetbarát és szorjetellenes*, p. 121. This cooperation could work from the other side as well. For instance, the Norwegian Communist Party propagated peace and collaboration with Berlin and called for the abdication of the Norwegian king during the German occupation, in 1940. Wieviorka, O.: *The Resistance*, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> For example, they named Regent Horthy as a drinker stupid raftsman. Máthé, Á.: *Nyilaskonspiráció*, p. 57.

<sup>85</sup> Zoltán, Meskó (1883–1959): right wing politician who established Hungarian National Socialist Agrarian Workers' and Laborers' Party [Magyar Nemzeti Szocialista Földműves és Munkás Párt] in 1932, the first Hungarian political formation which used the symbol of arrow cross. Paksy, Z: *Nyilas mozgalom*, pp. 73–80.

<sup>86</sup> Magyar Nemzet, 7. March 1940, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Népszava, 21. March 1941, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Kossuth Népe, 7 April 1946, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Social democrats opposed this idea. Népszava, 28. March 1945. p. 3.

leads us to the last months of the war, when Zsabka functioned as one of the most important figures of the Hungarian armed resistance. To understand this astonishing turn, we must step back until the summer of 1944.

In the end of August 1944, seeing Bukarest successfully secede from the German alliance, Horthy decided to prepare the turn of Budapest. He appointed a new government in the German occupied country lead by general Géza Lakatos.<sup>90</sup> The new PM was very cautious and tried to manage on diplomatic way, but as a high-ranking officer he exactly knew that a loyal armed force will be essential as a military background for his aims. Lakatos established Home Guard (HG, "Nemzetőrség"), a militia which officially aimed to secure the hinterland for the fighting corps preventing sabotage and partisan actions.<sup>91</sup> But in reality, HG was organized for preparing the changeover of Hungary.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, Horthy attempt to leave the war was unsuccessful and Germans let ACP take power on 16. October 1944. ACP shortly set up or reactivated their security organisations like Armed Party Service, Armed Nation Service, National Reckoning Organisation, National Reckoning Office, or the Military Security Service.<sup>93</sup> One of these military organizations was the Auxiliary Security Forces (with Hungarian acronym: KISKA). KISKA was not a completely new formation. It was organized from HG which hungarists did not trust. But having not enough armed and trained soldiers, they just simply took over HG and renamed it in the beginning of November 1944. KISKA was controlled by the minister of war and the minister of interior in common, thus it was not a militia of ACP.<sup>94</sup> However, many KISKA commanders or fighters were former ACP members who had left the party for various reasons. That was the case with Zsabka who commanded one of the biggest KISKA which took part in the Hungarian armed resistance in 1944.

The Hungarian Anti-Nazi conspiracy during the ACP rule was led by another Slovak origin Hungarian racialist, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky who was chosen the head of the Hungarian National Uprising Liberation Committee (HNULC) in the beginning of November 1944. HNULC was established by the grand coalition of "Magyar Front", an umbrella organization formed by banned political formations like, *inter alia*, Smallholders' Party, Social Democrat Party, Communist Party and legitimists in May 1944. The military staff of HNULC planned to break a revolt in the centre of Budapest once the Red Army reached the capital, furthermore they aimed to open a corridor for the Soviets at the frontline.<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that the Austrian resistance tried to do the same in Wien in the beginning of April 1945. "Operation Radetzky" was organized by Provisorische Österreichische Nationalkomitee which was very similar to HNULC since they considered themselves as an interim government and included not only leftists, but political

<sup>90</sup> Lakatos, Géza (1890–1967): colonel-general; Prime Minister between 29 August and 16 October 1944. Lakatos cautiously attempted to exit Hungary from the war keeping the reannexed territories at the same time. After the ACP coup he was captured by the Germans.

<sup>91</sup> Honvédségi Közlöny, 27. September 1944. p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Gazsi, J.: *Egy zászlóalj krónikája*, p. 16. Bartha, Á.: *Véres város*, pp. 97–99.

<sup>93</sup> In details, see Teleki, É.: *Nyilas uralom Magyarországon*, pp. 120–133.

<sup>94</sup> Budapesti Közlöny, 4. November 1944, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Bartha, Á.: *Anti-Nazi Politics*, pp. 509–510.

forces with Anglo-Saxon orientation as well. Their fate was also similar: betrayal, detection, and hangings.<sup>96</sup>

Zsabka was not caught when HNULC was liquidated on 22–23. November 1944. As an experienced paramilitary commander, he had an efficient corps (KISKA XIV/2) with approximately one thousand members in district Zugló. Most of these soldiers or deserters just wanted to survive and not to fight to anyone, but it cannot be referred for RG members who followed their leader to the resistance. Zsabka formed special squads from these hard-line and experienced Anti-German commandos.<sup>97</sup> They were fighting in the night with ACP militiamen and, surprisingly, rescued many Jews. Probably, they did it not only for humanitarian reasons but for thinking about their future as well, just before total collapse. Thus, albeit the official aim of KISKA was to secure the hinterland for the Hungarian and German Army, it became very soon a cover organization for Jews, leftists, deserters, and resistance fighters.<sup>98</sup>

As a recent study explained, “terrorism has often been created primarily by its opponents, in the sense that it has been the actions of police forces, occupying armies or wider state repression which has given rise to terrorism. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of the Resistance movements in Europe in the 1940s”.<sup>99</sup> In this context KISKA easily can be linked to terrorism which was an everyday routine by the ACP terror state. Nevertheless, radicalized state violence was not started with resistant fighters or hungarists in Hungary. In the beginning of 1942 almost four thousand civilians (primarily Serbs and Jews) were murdered as partisans in the Novi Sad massacre by Hungarian soldiers and gendarmes in the territory which Hungary occupied after the German attack on Yugoslavia.<sup>100</sup> But not only mass murders but a real genocide can be connected to the Hungarian state administration and armed forces before the ACP rule. In summer 1944, more than 430 000 Hungarian Jews were deported – in cooperation with the German invaders – to Nazi concentration camps, vast majority to Auschwitz-Birkenau.<sup>101</sup> Albeit, holocaust can be described as a form of state terror,<sup>102</sup> these mass murders happened hundreds of kilometres away from Hungary. Therefore, state terror became a dramatic everyday common experience only when ACP took over the power in the middle of October 1944. ACP militias killed several hundred people (mostly Jews) on the first few

96 However, in contrast to the Hungarian resistance, the Austrian Anti-Nazi officers managed to cooperate with the Soviets, which resulted a shortened siege for Wien. Stelzl-Marx, B.: *Carl Szokoll und die Operation „Radezky“*, pp. 95–114.

97 ÁBTL 4.1. A-747, p. 13.

98 For the resistance activities of the Budapest-based KISKA corps, in details: Bartha, Á.: *Véres város*, pp. 211–267.

99 Haupt, H.-G. – Weinhauer, K.: *Terrorism and the state*, p. 209.

100 Klimó, Á. von: *Remembering Cold Days*, pp. 21–44.

101 Genocide is a radical form of political violence. Miller M. A.: *The Foundations of Modern Terrorism*, p. 1.

102 State terrorism is a term which is used, inter alia, “to describe widespread acts of cruelty committed by a state against its own people by Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, et al.” Aust, A.: *Handbook of International Law*, p. 265.

days of the hungarist rule in Budapest and later about 3600 persecutees were shot into river Danube in the very centre of the besieged capital.<sup>103</sup>

Since KISKA was operating as a legal military force in a dictatorship, they cannot be considered an underground organization. Nevertheless, some KISKA corps clashed with Arrow Cross militias, mostly at night. At Christmas 1944, three members from Zsabka's guard attacked the central building of the ACP in Zugló. The bravery of those two who died in this firefight is commemorated on a memorial tablet in the district.<sup>104</sup> However, the most common KISKA resistance activity was not the straight firefight, but a tricky method of live saving. The chaotic circumstances and the official facade of KISKA collectively resulted the opportunity for this kind of masked struggle. "The suspected person appeared in the factory with an armband, gendarme cap and pistol. When gendarmes guided Büchler, Singler and other Jewish officers out, he asked them to give him the Jews, because he wants to shoot them" – remembered a survivor and naturally nobody could know in the mentioned factory that the mentioned Jews will not be killed but they will be released at the next corner (as it is happened).<sup>105</sup> KISKA members could save lives only in the style of the Arrow Cross militia, moreover they looked similar (armband, gendarme cap). Partly that is the reason why they could not be integrated into the Hungarian "antifascist pantheon" after 1945, however most of these lifesaving actions were confirmed by survivors and later by historians as well.<sup>106</sup>

It is more difficult to explain the real relations between KISKA and the German troops. Hungarian paramilitary squads often gained equipment from their ally not in legal ways or even by fighting against them in the night, but a kind of cooperation is also perceptible. A key person of the armed resistance, Staff Captain Zoltán Mikó successfully persuaded some disappointed "Volksdeutsch" SS-soldiers, who had been born in Hungary, but recruited by "one of the largest transnational armies of the time", the Waffen-SS,<sup>107</sup> to join his resistance group.<sup>108</sup> Another connecting form was the illegal business. For instance, Zsabka bought a precious SS Jagdverband certificate which certified that his corps cannot be moved to the frontline. Sometimes KISKA commanders corrupted German officers for uniforms or weapons.<sup>109</sup> "Following Zsabka's command, I and Ernő Varga guided three Jewish persons to the Jewish Secondary School in Abonyi Street. Here, as far as I know, paid German SS soldiers were looking after the Jews, saving them from troubles" – remembered a KISKA soldier and hardly can be clarified

<sup>103</sup> Tabajdi, G.: *Duna-parti gyilkosságok*, pp. 32–39. Nyilasterror Budapesten 1944–1945. [http://konfliktuskutato.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=328:etnikai-konfliktusok-erdei-1918-1919&catid=39:dka-hatter&Itemid=203](http://konfliktuskutato.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=328:etnikai-konfliktusok-erdei-1918-1919&catid=39:dka-hatter&Itemid=203), cited: 9. 9. 2021.

<sup>104</sup> Bartha, Á.: *A kisegítő honvéd karhatalom*, p. 293.

<sup>105</sup> Witness report, 9. April 1946. ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-65804.

<sup>106</sup> Gazsi, J.: *Egy zászlóalj krónikája*. Sterl, I.: *A KISKA*. Kovács, G.: *Alkonyat Budapest felett*, pp. 317–352.

<sup>107</sup> Gerwarth, R. – Gildea, R.: *Resistance and collaboration*, p. 177.

<sup>108</sup> Bondor, V.: *A Mikó-rejtély*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>109</sup> Bartha, Á. – Pócs, N. – Szécsényi, A.: *Egy hosszan „ébredő” II.*, p. 251. For SS-Jagdverbände in Hungary see Kovács, Z. A. – Számvéber, N.: *A Waffen-SS*, pp. 398–399.

if real German SS soldiers or Hungarians in German uniform rescued the Jewish persecutees in this case.<sup>110</sup>

Not Zsabka and his comrades were the only ones who participated in armed resistance under the umbrella organization of KISKA. We know of further 16 auxiliary corps which were connected to the Hungarian resistance.<sup>111</sup> Among them, many commanders, deputy-commanders, or members who had associated with RG or with ACP decided to fight against ACP militias or saved Jews in the last months of the war. A young tradesman, who later became a media mogul in West Germany, also did so. "Josef von Ferenczy" made not only his luck but also his past in emigration since he was born originally as a son of a mason who died imprisoned for murder. However, József Ferenczi was a real self-made man, indeed. He joined RG and Turul Association and by the time of the aryанизation of the Jewish property he became a successful tradesman and a wannabe film producer in Budapest maintaining good relationship with Zsabka. That was his main link to the resistance since the movie makers had their own illegal platform here. Ferenczi found his place at the KISKA VIII/2 commanded by Ferenc Mátray Máté, an actor who was a former member of the hungarist group of Hunnia Film Studio. However, in the end of 1944 Mátray Máté's fellows crashed with the ACP militia, damaged German vehicles, and rescued imprisoned social democrat leaders (who finally could not survive the ACP rule).<sup>112</sup>

But (former) radical rightists can be found among the second in commands of KISKA XIII/1 battalion as well, albeit this corps was based in a traditional worker district of Budapest, called "Angyalföld". They were the only KISKA whereof a book could be published under the years of socialism in Hungary, respecting the antifascist ideological framework.<sup>113</sup> Besides Zsabka's formation the Gidófalvy Lajos led KISKA XIII/1 was the biggest and the most effective auxiliary force in Budapest. Reserve first lieutenant Gidófalvy himself served in a free corps in 1938,<sup>114</sup> since one of his company commanders from the four, Imre Kapocsfy was a TH member. Kapocsfy was sent to KISKA XIII/1 by Ferenc Kiss, another "turan hunter" who worked closely with the HNULC in 1944. Ferenc Kálmánfi, another company commander of Gidófalvy, was a former poacher who had joined ACP in November 1940 and later served in an Anti-Partisan squad on the Eastern Front. For his services he was honoured with the Knight Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. The third company commander, Tivadar Horváth served in RG and was decorated with National Defence Cross. Despite their past, they all participated in the armed resistance in the end of the war.<sup>115</sup>

110 Bartha Á. – Pócs N. and Szécsényi A.: *Egy hosszan „ébredő” II.*, p. 17. Further examples for SS (uniform) life saving in the besieged Budapest: Ungváry, K.: *Hősök?*, pp. 164–166 and 176.

111 Gazsi, József: Antifasiszta ellenállás Budapesten 1941–1944. Kandidátusi értekezés. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA KIK), Budapest. Manuscripts, D/14.302, p. 437.

112 Bartha, Á.: *A kisegítő honvéd karhatalom*, pp. 301–305.

113 Gazsi J.: *Egy zászlóalj krónikája*.

114 ÁBTL 4.1. A-880, p. 13. p. 14. p. 37.

115 In details, see Bartha, Á.: *A kisegítő honvéd karhatalom*, pp. 285–290.

## Conclusions

RG, ACP, and KISKA were both (originally) right-wing formations with connecting points to various forms of political violence. RG operated as an armed paramilitary unit, ACP reached state terror from street violence under less than a decade and KISKA was established as a violence organization by the ACP terror state. The case study of Kálmán Hubay and Kálmán Zsabka illustrated the two types of right-wing radicalism in the interwar Hungary. Hubay, a professional organizer, led those right extremist masses who adapted Nazism to the Hungarian imperial thought and expected the revival of the Hungarian Empire in the German-lead "New Europe". By contrast, Zsabka and the whole organizational network of "total racialism" aimed to follow the heritage of the Hungarian independence struggles and wanted to rebuild the Hungarian Empire saving the sovereignty of the country. Although, it was nothing more than wishful thinking in the given political context, racialists were employed and supported by the Hungarian government and the Homeland Defence Force General Staff.

About the correlations it is turned out that many former ACP members and RG volunteers have been integrated into KISKA where they participated, for several reasons, in the anti-Nazi resistance. As leaders, or deputy leaders of their corps, instead of fulfilling their official task, which was to secure the hinterland, they started a very dangerous double game, saving Jews and supporting those who aimed to fight for freedom. But "according to the famous dictum, one person's terrorists are another person's freedom fighters"<sup>116</sup> and from the point of view of the ACP state, resistant fighters were really "terrorists" and "bandits".<sup>117</sup> Similar duality can be realized in the case of RG. While subversive operations of 1938–39 were celebrated as a "freedom fight" on the right side of the Hungarian political arena before 1945,<sup>118</sup> after the war Raggeds were widely named "terrorists" and "bandits" by the Hungarian leftists.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Haupt, H.-G. – Weinhauer, K.: *Terrorism and the state*, p. 176.

<sup>117</sup> Magyarország, 11. September 1944, p. 8. Pesti Hirlap 3. December 1944, p. 1.

<sup>118</sup> Kárpáti Magyar Hirlap, 25. October 1943, p. 2. Az Óslakó, 9. January 1944, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> HU BFL VII.5.e. 1949/21869. Világosság, 25. April 1948, p. 3.

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## Terrorists and freedom fighters. Arrow Cross Party Militias, "Ragged Guard" and "KISKA" Auxiliary Forces in Hungary (1938–1945)

"Ragged Guard" (RG), Arrow Cross Party (ACP), and KISKA were right-wing formations in the interwar Hungary. RG operated as a Horthy-loyal paramilitary unit, ACP came from the political underworld and reached state terror from street violence under less than a decade since KISKA was established originally as a violence organization of the ACP terror state. This paper analyses the correlations of these three formations between 1938 and 1945. As a first step, the exact meaning of *total racialism*, a Hungarian right radical ideological construction, is attempted to be clarified. After this theoretical introduction and following a short glance on the historical background, the paper discusses the story of RG, a militia which was engaged in the "Uplands" in 1938. After the "Upland" campaign an intense rivalry begun between the German-loyal and the Anti-German free corps' veterans. The detailed case study of Kálmán Hubay and Kálmán Zsabka illustrated the two types of right-wing radicalism in the interwar Hungary. Hubay, a professional organizer, led those right extremist masses who adapted Nazism to the Hungarian imperial thought and expected the revival of the Hungarian Empire in the German-led "New Europe". By contrast, Zsabka and the whole organizational network of "total racialism" aimed to follow the heritage of the Hungarian independence struggles and wanted to rebuild the Hungarian Empire saving the sovereignty of the country. In autumn 1944, many former ACP members and RG volunteers have been integrated into KISKA where they participated, for several reasons, in the anti-Nazi resistance. My paper aims to explain the reasons of these zigzagged careers involving the recent Hungarian and international literature and a vast array of archive materials and press sources.



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