

RK: 1. a "Hungarian Brotherhood" saját fordításom, amennyiben létezik angolul szakirodalom, aszerint kellene fordítani! akkor is maradjon az első előfordulásnál a magyar neve is, így a többi szervezeti kifejezésnél is.
2. a bekezdés számozást javítani kell, mindig összekuszálódik.

History of the Hungarian Brotherhood
PhD Dissertation
Notes

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I. Summary of the research project

Research about the Hungarian Brotherhood (*Magyar Testvéri Közösség*) has until now dealt primarily with the succession of trials in 1947 and their consequences. No in-depth analysis of the Brotherhood's history beyond the trials has yet been conducted. My research attempts to uncover the so far unknown aspects of this secret society in a research paper, including

- the beginnings of the Brotherhood in Hungary in the time between the two world wars;
- the Brotherhood's organisation and operation;
- the Brotherhood's ideology, revising the trumped-up charges rendered in the trials;
- the tangible results of the Brotherhood's pursuits;
- the role of the Brotherhood in the national resistance;
- the Brotherhood's reorganisation after World War II;
- the role of the Underground Chief Command (*Földalatti Fővezérség*) and the so-called Committee of the Seven (*Hetes Bizottság*), the two main bodies charged in the trials as the co-ordinators of conspiracy against the Republic, and their relationship with the Brotherhood, as well as the political activities of the Brotherhood after 1945;
- the connection of the Hungarian Brotherhood with the Popular Movement (*Népmozgalom*) led by Aladár Weissshaus.

A primary consideration in my research was to separate the trumped-up charges attached to the Brotherhood during the trials and the actual facts.

II. I set out to collect the documentation and to read through the literature about the Brotherhood under the direction of my dissertation advisor Dr. Sándor M. Kiss.

The research is based on the following sources:

1. Archive documents

1.1. Historic Archives on National Security Documents

In this collection, the majority of documents about the Brotherhood consists of the records of evidence from the State Security Department (ÁVO) noted down during the interrogations. They include still extant documents produced in preparation for the post-1945 case, such as intelligence on individuals under observation and wire-tapping reports on István Szent-Miklós's flat. Important sources of information are the reports dictating the course of the interrogations and their internal *modus operandi*, as well as intelligence files on the trials and individuals registered by the state security authorities, and agent reports on members of the Brotherhood. The earliest documents I found date from the early 1980s.

1.2. Budapest Archives

These documents comprise the records of the tribunal conducted by the People's Commissars and the documents related to the litigation, including the documents attached as evidence in the tribunals such as the defendants' earlier publications, confiscated letters from prison, and notes taken by the defendants during the trials.

My research is based first or all on archival sources. Considering that the subject is a secret society, no public administrative documents were produced, leaving little evidence for future historical investigation. However, in the course of the trial and at the ÁVO their history was uncovered in detail. With the Brotherhood, and especially the Misthét trial, there are considerable differences between confessions wrought during ÁVO interrogations and the testimonies at the People's Tribunals. Almost without exception, the defendants changed their testimonies in detail at the Tribunals from those extracted by the ÁVO. The comparison between the Tribunal and ÁVO testimonies allowed for the distinction between the trumped-up charge and the actual events. To arrive at the charges, the reports regulating the internal work of the agents and agent reports on the interrogation process provided important information. The agent reports on Brotherhood members written mostly in the 1960s also put the events in a different light from the charges set down in the trials, as do the analyses written by agents intimate with the Brotherhood. Prison correspondence and letters illegally sent to family members provide insight into the position of the defendants, that is, their attempts at synchronising their testimonies. However, there are limits to uncovering the facts irrespective of the charges since there are almost no sources other than the ones produced precisely for the purpose of corroborating the trumped-up charges and by dictatorial means, and the records kept by the state security authorities also produced for the purpose of corroborating the charges.

2. Contemporary press publications

- 2.1. Journals published by the Brotherhood: *Magyar Élet*, *Magyar Út*, and *Tiszántúl*. These helped in the analysis of the Brotherhood's ideology.
- 2.2. The journal *Új Szó* published by the Weissshaus movement, which shed light on the workings of that group.

3. Secondary literature: studies and monographs

In the course of my research I examined numerous studies and scholarly publications, most notably András Kis's book about the Hungarian Brotherhood and the text by István Csicsery-Rónay and Géza Cserenyey, as well as works that dealt exclusively with the history of the Brotherhood.

- 3.1 András Kis, *A Magyar Közösségtől a Földalatti fővezérségig* (From the Hungarian Brotherhood to the Underground Chief Command), Budapest 1969.

In line with the tendency of the time, András Kis's book offers a summary of the charges formulated in the trial. It provides a good overview of the internal organisation of the Brotherhood but does not offer anything new compared to the documents of the trial

- 3.2 István Csicsery-Rónay and Géza Cserenyey, *Koncepció per a Független Kisgazdapárt szétzúzására* (Show Trial for Breaking Up the Independent Smallholder's Party), Budapest 1998.

Of the two authors, Csicsery-Rónay was himself a member of the Brotherhood and a defendant in the Misthét trial, which underscores the credibility of the book. At the same time, it only touches on the subject matter of my dissertation, concentrating more on the trials themselves and their consequences.

4. Memoirs, interviews

They shed light on the events from individuals' points of view. A comparison between the events recalled in the historical in-depth interviews and the confessions produced in the trials were useful for clarifying the trumped-up charges.

In addition, I conducted face-to-face interviews with János Horváth, István Csicsery-Rónay and Ferenc Atzél (Ede Atzél's son).

III. Summary and thesis of research outcomes

1. The Brotherhood began in Hungary between the two world wars under the auspices of the Rákóczi Balatonfűrdő Association. In 1938 the organisation broke up and the members reorganised themselves. The group now took the name The Hungarian Brotherhood, under the cover organisation of the society *Honszeretet* (Love for the Fatherland). The unique organisational structure was built up and the Brotherhood's leaders were, for the most part, chosen at this time.
2. The organisational structure of the Brotherhood closely resembled that of the Freemasons. Members could join the Brotherhood after being observed at length. Now they were assigned to areas of work or into families grouped according to organisational duties. The organisational structure was made up of families (*család*), clans (*nemzetség*), and armies (*had*), with a Commanding Council (*Vezértanács*) at the helm. The organisation was clandestine externally and internally, which meant that no one knew anyone else beyond the family. Members communicated with each other and with the Commanding Council through so-called mediators, who constituted a family onto themselves. Their mission was to visit the various family gatherings.
3. The Brotherhood operated not exclusively in Budapest, though it was here that it was best organised. The provincial organisations were relatively independent from the central leadership. Their direction was the task of the Provincial Committee, headed by Dr. János Tóth and Ernő Péter.
4. In contrast to the charges made in the trials, the Brotherhood was neither fascist nor did it have a racial agenda with an objective to suppress other "races"; it did not adhere to the ideology personified by Governor Horthy and it was not chauvinistic.
 - 4.1. The concept of race, which the Brotherhood used in its rhetoric, was not the same as the racial concept as interpreted by the Tribunal, "which basically is in effect since Hitler and is connected to the concept of a biological race." The idea of race in the sense of the Brotherhood was the one professed by the poet Endre Ady, according to which it identified the nation as a community that, in contrast to the feudal concept, included every member of society. It was not genetically grounded; rather it professed a common fate and solidarity on a national basis.
 - 4.2 The Brotherhood was not a "revolutionary" organisation formed for the purpose of overthrowing a regime. It adapted itself to the given regime and, utilising the possibilities inherent in the regime, sought to reform or influence it. Any sort of violent action was contrary to its principles. Its goal was to defend the Hungarian people and not to conquer it.
 - 4.3 The relationship of the Brotherhood to the Horthy regime:
 - 4.3.1 The trial based its allegation that the Brotherhood wanted to restore the Horthy regime on the idea of legal continuity. The premise of a legal continuity can be stipulated exclusively, and arguably, in relation to certain sections of the paper by György Donáth. As an organisation, the Brotherhood never made the principle of legal continuity part of its ideology.

- 4.3.2 The personal composition of the Brotherhood does not corroborate the charge that it wanted to restore the Horthy regime. In certain respects the Brotherhood can be regarded as having been in opposition to that regime.
- 4.3.3 The Brotherhood considered Dezső Szabó and László Németh as their spiritual leaders (although the two writers were never its members). It had an affinity to the Popular Movement, which it supported with its particular means. A society based on the Horthyist ideology would not have chosen the Popular Movement and writers openly opposed to the policies of the Horthy regime as their spiritual hinterland.
- 4.3.4 The relationship between the Brotherhood and the Popular Movement: The Popular Movement was born out of the social injustice that, due to the country's political and power structure, one third of Hungary's population were landless peasants deprived of their legal rights and subsisting at the nation's peripheries. The Brotherhood, whose aim was to accept the nation's common fate and to raise the nation as a whole and without regard to anyone's social status, had a natural ally in the Popular Movement. Through the Hungarian Society for the Support of Literature (*Magyar Irodalompartoló Társaság*) the Brotherhood assisted populist writers financially via its book and journal publishing house *Turul Könyv és Lapkiadó Kft.* by offering them the possibility to be published there. The most tangible connection was through the journals supported by the Brotherhood that became organs of populist literature.
- 4.4 Chauvinist-revisionist ideology: László Németh and Dezső Szabó, the spiritual leaders of the Brotherhood, early on voiced opposition to the official revisionist policy that came to the fore in Hungary between the world wars. In the Brotherhood's initiation text it aims to restore the ethnic borders of Hungary and not its historical ones, which was in contrast to the official revisionist policy of the Horthy regime.

5 The activities of the Brotherhood

5.1 Training of members

5.1.1 Ideological training

5.1.2 Training for professional meticulousness

5.1.3 Training for independent action

5.2 Mutual assistance

5.3 Influencing political, social, economic and cultural life

5.3.1 The composition of the membership determined the possibilities of the Brotherhood to exert its influence. There are differing estimates regarding the size of its membership, ranging from 2000 to 4000. A decisive majority of members came from a middle-class background.

5.3.2 Because of its ideology, the Brotherhood was not linked to any political party; rather it tried to reinforce those platforms that best represented Hungarian interests in various political and social groups.

5.3.3 During the Horthy regime the Brotherhood was not able to recruit members from among the political elite apart from one or two ministers and representatives.

5.3.4 The Brotherhood was able to exert influence first of all via middle-level civil servants in ministries and government institutions. It laid emphasis on wielding influence at ministries but also considered it important that its members should excel in their professional capabilities.

5.3.5 It tried to be present in cultural and social life. Following the social and cultural scenes and influencing them was the task of the external-movement families (*külmozgalmi családok*).

5.3.6 Establishing business undertakings: They served to create capital for the Brotherhood on the one hand, and provided funds for businesses and organisations that were to be supported.

5.3.7 Charity goals: to support the St. Stephen's Boys' Home of Hungarian Mothers with Many Children (*Sokgyermekes Magyar Anyák Szent István Fiúotthon*) operating in Gödöllő.

6 The Brotherhood was active in the anti-German resistance.

6.1 A 19 March 1944 circular (*1944 április FEB-anyag*) from the Commanding Council reproves any anti-German action and at the same time pronounces the end of any organised operation of the Brotherhood. However, this memo was written as a cover-up. The anti-German stance of the Brotherhood followed from its ideology. Still, as a result of the memo the Brotherhood did not participate in the resistance as an organisation, only via its members.

6.2 It also participated in the anti-German resistance through its work in the Hungarian Independence Movement (*Magyar Függetlenségi Mozgalom*, MFM), whose head and numerous members were members of the Brotherhood. A major mission of the MFM was:

6.2.1 to organise Hungary's pulling out of the war. This work involved:

6.2.1.1 the Pulling-out Bureau (Kiugrási Iroda) headed by Domokos Szent-Iványi;

6.2.1.2 the sending of a delegation to the British command in Italy that was flown out by Pilot Officer János Majoros, with the participation of Colonel-general István Náday and English Artillery Colonel Howie;

6.2.1.3 organising the Faust delegation;

6.2.1.4 the trip to Italy by Géza Soós, Domokos Hadnagy, Árpád Toperczer and Sándor Rakovich.

6.2.2 saving Jewish and politically persecuted persons;

6.2.3 co-ordinating the co-operation of various resistance organisations.

7 The circular the Brotherhood issued after the war, in March 1944, dissolved the organisation, but it continued to perform certain activities informally and via ad hoc meetings of members.

7.1 Re-organisation of a formal framework for the Brotherhood: Two different platforms developed among Brotherhood members. The one represented first of all by the former Commanding Council and Károly Kiss held that the time was not ripe for the re-organisation of the Brotherhood. The other, headed by Dr. János Tóth, Ernő Péter and the former provincial organisers, wanted to re-establish the Brotherhood with a new ideology and organisational make-up, and definitely under a new command. The outcome was a new Commanding Council and a slow-paced re-organisation of the Brotherhood. A group forming behind Tóth and Péter was dissatisfied with the composition of the new Commanding Council and began to operate on its own.

7.2 The Brotherhood's political activities: As a result of its ideology the Brotherhood came to confront the increasing influence of Soviet policies in Hungary that disregarded Hungarian interests. It raised its voice against it if not in a synchronised manner but on an individual basis, expressing dissatisfaction about Hungarian political developments at meetings and dinners among friends. Examples are

7.2.1 Domokos Szent-Iványi's message to British and American embassies;

7.2.2 taking up contact with Western European countries:

7.2.2.1 Aladár Kovách emigrated in 1946 and, according to the testimony of Vilmos Fitos, was working on setting up an escape route for Hungarian anti-Soviet political leaders.

7.2.2.2 Instructed by Márton Himmler, Miklós Csomóss collected information about the political situation in Hungary for Western Europeans.

- 7.2.3 The operation of the so-called Committee of the Seven: The designation of the Committee of the Seven was the consequence of an ÁVO investigation and involved a group of friends (János Héder, Bálint Arany, Domokos Szent-Iványi, István Szent-Miklós, Kálmán Saláta, György Donáth, Károly Kiss and Géza Soós) who met weekly to discuss current political issues.
- 7.2.4 The operation of the Underground Chief Command: an association of military officers led by Lajos Dálnoki Veress. Members were dissatisfied with the growing Soviet influence perceptible also in the army. They met first of all to discuss personal questions. With Dálnoki (who was assigned the position of minister to replace Horthy, should he be incapacitated after Hungary's 15 October 1944 attempt to pull out of its alliance with Germany), and the character of the organisation, the stage was set for subsequent charges of reactionary and fascist conspiracy.

The manipulations of László Pü nkösti, an officer in the military command who presented himself as an American secret agent, contributed to the arrest and exposure of the Underground Chief Command.

- 8 The relationship between the Brotherhood and the Weissshaus movement: Aladár Weissshaus had considerable experience in movement organisation. He was a member of the Social Democratic Party (*Szociáldemokrata Párt*, SZDP) since 1910 and a founding member in 1925 of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Socialista Munkáspárt*, MSZMP) who, during the Horthy regime, spent eight years in prison for Communist sedition. In the chapter of my paper dealing with Aladár Weissshaus and his movement I tried to find out what the relationship between the two fundamentally different organisations was.
- 8.1 After he left the Communist Party, Weissshaus began to organise his own Popular Movement. He organised so-called Marxist study circles and seminars where he taught Socialist ideology to workers. These study circles grew into a movement on a national scale with around 4000 participants. While the Weissshaus movement saw itself as part of the International Workers' Movement, it instituted numerous changes to the official "Soviet type" Communist course, which brought him close to the principles of the Hungarian Brotherhood.
- 8.1.1 The Popular Movement proclaimed Socialism without dictatorship or a class struggle but based on Hungarian national ideals.
- 8.1.2 Weissshaus held that another country model was not acceptable, not even the Soviet model. He remained true to this conviction also after 1945.
- 8.1.3 Since the Movement accepted the Nation as a framework that shapes society, it considered the situation of Hungary after the Trianon Peace Treaty important. Weissshaus considered a Socialist Central-European union the most favourable solution for Hungary's social and economic development. He believed that a "Central European People's Socialist Republic" should be established, one which would be free from dominance by any superpower but be acceptable to Western democracies, and in which Hungary, based on its historical and geographic position, would play a pioneering role in the struggle for Socialism.
- 8.2 From the 1930s the Weissshaus movement had contacts with the Miklós Bartha Society, the Smallholders' and Workers' Party (*Földműves- és Munkáspárt*) of dr. István Dénes, and the National Radical Party (*Nemzeti Radikális Párt*) of Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky. A large number of members of the Hungarian Brotherhood participated in these three organisations. Owing to these connections the Weissshaus movement and the Brotherhood had common members.

- 8.3 After 1945, Aladár Weissshaus' movement began to reorganise itself. That could have entailed a possibility for organising a workers' party that was independent of Soviet dominance and in opposition to the Communist Party. A meeting between Béla Kovács and Aladár Weissshaus underscores the viability of the initiative.
- 8.4 Several testimonies state that the Brotherhood looked on the Weissshaus movement as an organisation that conformed to the Brotherhood's aims and that steps had been taken to make contact with the Popular Movement through Brotherhood members who were also worker members in the Weissshaus movement.
- 8.5 ÁVO interrogations sought to uncover two groups that linked the two organisations.
- 8.5.1 Commissioned by the Smallholders' Party, Bálint Arany and József Dudás met with some workers from the Weissshaus movement and members of the Demény Group in November 1945. At the meeting, all three groups criticised the pace of nationalisation, the autocratic dominance in the trade unions of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, and stressed that Communist leaders should be of Hungarian origin. (Nothing unlawful took place during these meetings.)
- 8.5.2 An organisation linked to Miklós Benke, in which several workers from the Weissshaus movement who were also members of the Hungarian Brotherhood participated. The illegal organisation went under the name of Association of Communist Hungarians (*Kommunista Magyarok Szövetsége*) and its main aim was to oust the leaders of the Communist Party and to eliminate Jews from the Party and the government. In his testimony, Miklós Benke gave as the reason for his organisation that the role of Jewish Communist leaders would have exposed them to the "reactionaries". Therefore they had thought that they needed to distance themselves from the Jewish leadership in order to protect Communism and the workers who were of Hungarian race and that they had to protect the Party from Jewish charges. They issued pamphlets and conducted negotiations with the National Peasant Party (*Nemzeti Paraszt Párt*) and the Freedom Party (*Szabadság Párt*).
- 8.6 In the early stages when the ÁVO was working out its trumped-up charges against the Brotherhood it saw a possibility to purge various groups labelled as "fractious" at the same time. The report from late January stated that "in the Hungarian Brotherhood's conspiracy against the Republic the so-called fractions, which served the anti-revolutionary cause within the working class, played a significant role. Partly through its old and partly its new members, the fraction fused with the Hungarian Brotherhood not only in its ideology but extending to persons and organisation." It names five fractions (Aladár Weissshaus and his movement, the Demény movement, and the groups around Imre Faust, Lajos Szabó and Pál Simándy) that were linked with the preparations for the conspiracy led by the Brotherhood via their aim to overthrow the Republic. At the trial itself, however, it retracted from this far-reaching charge. From the Weissshaus movement, only Aladár Weissshaus was brought to trial with the main indictment of sedition against the Soviet Union.

The trial did not link up Miklós Benke's movement with Aladár Weissshaus, and presented the connection with the Hungarian Brotherhood as "incidental contacts through coinciding individuals."

IV. Publications

- *Erich Kästner különös élete* (The Unusual Life of Erich Kästner). **VIGILIA** 2000/7, 531-541
- Erich Kästner, *Fábián, egy moralista regénye* (Fabian – The Story of a Moralist, book review). **VIGILIA** 2000/7, 559-560
- Rubikon, 2001/4-5, (book review). **HETI VÁLASZ** Vol. I No. 7
- Károly D. Balla, *Kisebbségi áramszünet a schengeni fal tövében* (Minority Blackout at the Foot of the Schengen Wall, book review). **HETI VÁLASZ** Vol. I No. 7
- Anna Földes, *Irodalmi Újság* (Literary Paper, book review). **HETI VÁLASZ** 2001 Vol. I No. 13
- Ignác Romsics, *A trianoni békeszerződés*, (The Trianon Peace Treaty, book review). **FRISS HÍREK** (Internet journal) 3 August 2001
- Bálint Török, István Csicsery-Rónai, János Horváth, *A demokrácia fellegvárának építői* (The Builders of the Citadel of Democracy, book review). **HETI VÁLASZ** 2002 Vol. II No. 32
- Dr. László Varga, *Fények a ködben* (Lights in the Fog, book review). **SZÉPIRODALMI FIGYELŐ** February 2003
- *Európai kultúrtörténet* (European Cultural History, teaching aid) Farkas Heller College for Economics and Tourism. Year 2003/2004, correspondence course
- A Magyar Közösség és a weisshausista mozgalom kapcsolatai = *Tanulmányok évszázadok történetéből* (Connections between the Hungarian Brotherhood and the Weissshaus Movement = Studies in the History of Centuries). Ed. Zsuzsanna J. Újváry, Piliscsaba, 2006, 339-366.
- A Magyar Közösség ideológiája (The Ideology of the Hungarian Brotherhood, 40-page research paper) forthcoming.