

## **Militia Violence and State Power in Hungary, 1919-1922**

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**This essay** deals with an under-researched and an over-politicized topic in Hungarian history: militia violence against civilians after World War One. As far as this topic is concerned, historians before the collapse of the one-party state in 1989 focused their attention on two inter-related questions: the responsibility of Regent Miklós Horthy for the atrocities and the continuity between the White Terror, as this period of militia and state violence had been known in Hungary and Europe since the 1920s, and the interwar regime. Ignoring evidence that could have suggested a more nuanced conclusion, they argued that Admiral Horthy controlled the militias and, as their “Leader,” he bore both direct and indirect responsibility for their crimes. Seeking to paint as dark picture of the interwar regime and elite as possible, Marxist historians argued that the elite had never eliminated the militias. Integrated, they claimed, in large numbers into the police, the army and the state bureaucracy, the militias continued to function as a reserve army until 1945.<sup>1</sup>

The quality of books and articles on the interwar regime has improved significantly during the last fifteen years. In regards to militia violence, some of the gross oversimplifications have been eliminated. Recent studies point out that many army units and militias were not under Horthy’s control; even those militias that recognized Horthy as their leader did not necessarily carry out his orders. Present-day historians also tend to draw a more solid line between the post-war period, characterized by chaos and random violence, and the subsequent rule of the consolidated conservative regime.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, none of these works deal directly with militia violence. Thus many relevant issues still have to be explored and, because of the unreliability of earlier works, many old questions have to be revisited. We do not even know, for example, how many people were killed during the White Terror. The religious, social and ethnic compositions of both the perpetrators and the victims are still to be explored; the social causes of the White Terror and the psychologi-

cal motives of the perpetrators still have to be explained. Violence against women, a strong aspect of the White Terror, has so far been completely ignored. There has been no attempt, moreover, to compare the militias with similar units in other countries after the Great War, thus to put the issue of militia violence in a wider European context. Finally, the larger theoretical questions still have to be raised: does state power originate in violence? Was militia violence in Hungary a creative or a purely destructive force? Does power grow out of the barrel of gun as the Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-tung believed? Does violence function as the "midwife of history," constantly bringing forth social and political organizations and structures, or does it represent a purely destructive and historically barren force as philosopher Hannah Arendt argued?<sup>3</sup>

In this essay I seek to answer some of these larger questions by examining the complex relationship between the local and national elite and the most important militia unit, the Prónay Battalion between 1919 and 1923. In this paper I will argue that the militias played a complex role in Hungarian society: their destructiveness notwithstanding, the rogue military units fulfilled useful functions by responding positively to the material needs of at least some segments of the population. The economic and political consolidation of the counter-revolutionary regime made the militias as service providers obsolete; simultaneously, conciliation strengthened the hands of the political and military elite by giving them both the means and the nerve to threaten the militias. In this paper, I argue that moral outrage over militia crimes played only a minor role in the final break between the radical and the authoritarian Right. What separated the conservatives from the right radicals was not greater respect for human rights and more ethnic and religious tolerance, even if conservatives, indeed, tended to possess more of these qualities. Rather it was their ability to view politics as a multi-dimensional game and, if necessary, to control and even sacrifice their prejudices at the altar of power. The elite finally turned against the militias because, with the onset of consolidation, the rouge military units had lost their usefulness, and also because they had become a threat to the counter-revolutionary regime. The recognition of the threat posed by the extreme right, rather than the integration at least some of the members of the militias into the interwar army, police and bureaucracy, I believe, represented the most important legacy of the White Terror. Conservatives' fear and distrust of right radial movements and the behind-the-scenes conflict between the two remained the a salient feature of Hungarian political life until 1944.

## **Anomie and the Source of Militia Violence**

By browsing through the police reports, the court documents and the correspondence between military units and various ministries that can be found in the files of the Prónay Battalion at the Archive of the Ministry of Defense in Budapest, one is struck by the similarities between common, especially juvenile, crimes and those committed by the officers of this unit. Gang-style tactics, such as random violence and bullying validated as defense of personal honour, characterize many of the complaints raised against the officers of the Prónay Battalion in police and court records. The perpetrators, like Lieutenant László Thiringer, were typical bullies who rationalized and, to the authorities, tried to justify their aggression by accusing their victims of having unpatriotic or leftist sympathies. On leave in his hometown in Western Hungary, Thiringer beat up a young blue-collar worker, Antal Véber, in the local movie theatre and then handed him over to the police. Thiringer claimed that Véber was a saboteur and an enemy of the Hungarian nation because he booed a documentary that demanded the restoration of Hungary's old borders. Véber told the court that politics was not on his mind at all; he did not understand the documentary and only wanted the feature presentation to start.<sup>4</sup>

In an earlier article, I argued that militia violence had two sources: first, it had to do with the ways in which young soldiers from the elite and the middle class perceived and interpreted the actions of their real or alleged enemies, such as the Jews, working-class activists and radical peasants. This perception was in turn shaped by middle-class values fostered by elite and middle-class institutions, such as the nuclear family, schools and universities, social clubs, political parties and the army. Leaning heavily on the works of Adorno, Fromm and Theweleit, I contended that individuals with peculiar personality structure, i.e. "authoritarian personality types," flocked into the militias. Rouge military units, such as the Prónay Battalion attracted exceptionally cruel individuals. With Christopher Browning, who looked at the history of a police unit in Nazi-occupied Poland, I also argued that perpetual violence, by constantly weeding out the faint-hearted and by turning the timid into hardened killers, tended to reinforce the results of self-selection. The militias differed from regular army units in many respects: recruitment and promotion were based political reliability and personal relations, rather

than on qualifications and merit. Turnover in the officers' detachments was high: officers and soldiers often changed units or left the scene altogether. Prónay's leadership style was charismatic, while modern armies prefer bureaucratic leaders. The officers' detachments had no clear place in the military hierarchy and enjoyed privileges not awarded to regular units. The relationship of the Prónay Battalion with the civilian population both lacked structure and was wrought by distrust, violence and exploitation. The rogue military units in short displayed all the symptoms of an unsettled situation: they were both the product and the cause of chaos. Since the main militia leaders did not enter the army and the state bureaucracy, there was no direct link, I argued, between the militias and the interwar army, just as there was no direct link between the White Terror and the authoritarian regime.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay, I intend to take the argument a step forwards. Militia violence, I plan to argue, cannot be reduced to self-selection and structural peculiarities: the torture and murder of civilians were also the product of a social phenomenon known as "anomie" or "normlessness." The term *anomie* was first used by the French sociologist Emil Durkheim at the turn of the century and after the Second World War was expanded upon by the American sociologist Robert Merton and his students. While Durkheim perceived normlessness as the result of modernization, Merton understood it as the possible outcome of creative discrepancy between "culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests held out as legitimate objectives for all members of the society" and culturally approved means of reaching these goals. In the absence of a rough balance between the two, aberrant behaviour and the development of aberrant personality types followed. Merton distinguished among five types of personality types; all except the conformist represented deviant responses. The conformist accepted both societal goals and means. The innovator accepted the goals but rejected the means for their achievement. Common criminals usually fell into this category: they usually subscribed to culturally accepted goals, such as wealth and high social status, and used any means to reach them. The ritualist, typically a bureaucrat, obeyed and enforced the rules but forgot about their original purpose. The retreatist rejected both the culturally set goals and culturally approved means. This was the normal behaviour of alcoholics, drug addicts and other asocials who vented their aggression on their own body and mind. Finally, the rebel did not stop at rejecting both means and end but continued to search for and,

if found, sought to realize alternative societal goals, even if this implied recourse to violence.<sup>6</sup>

Anomie among officers took many forms; it manifested itself, among other things, in asocial behaviour and arbitrary violence against civilians. On return to the military base from a weekly leave, Ernő Prost, another member of the Prónay Battalion, asked his fellow officer on the train to hold his seat while he had a drink in the train restaurant. A young civilian by the name of János Kaspár entered the compartment and took, despite the passenger's protest, Prost's seat. The returning Prost and his comrade manhandled the hapless civilian and then handed him over to the military police at the next station for allegedly making disrespectful remarks about the National Army.<sup>7</sup> Just how little regard and patience officers of the Prónay Battalion had for civilians can also be seen from the case of Second Lieutenant Károly Kmetty. He got involved in a minor car accident while transporting musical instruments in his vehicle. The neck of the cello (bőgő) broke off and the infuriated Kmetty pulled out his revolver and threatened to shoot the offending driver and his passenger. His men succeeded in calming him down; the officers in the end "only" punched their victims in the face and then tied their hands to the bumper of Kmetty's car.<sup>8</sup>

Normlessness implied a disregard for professional codes of conduct, middle-class etiquette and everyday social conventions. The primary sources show that military officers represented a threat to civilians not only as in the roles of enforcers but also as private individuals, including customers. Prónay's men thus provoked a fight with the male staff and the friends of a local brothel in the second district of Budapest because the staff refused to open the door of the establishment after midnight.<sup>9</sup> While the female employees of the local brothel escaped the encounter with the intoxicated bullies, István Bodor, a staff member in Hotel Imperial in Budapest, was not so lucky. He was arrested by officers of the Prónay Battalion for allegedly stealing from them. The officers transported him to the military base in Kelenföld, on the outskirts of Budapest, where he was kept in jail and periodically tortured for four weeks.<sup>10</sup>

Officers usually justified their actions by pointing to the alleged failure of their victims to "show respect." Hence they not only behaved but also talked like criminals: violent criminals too, sociologists and criminologists point out, cite lack of respect on their victims' part as the triggering mechanism for their aggression.<sup>11</sup> Similarity in language and motive was not an accident. Both prisons and army barracks are in

Merton's term "total institutions:" they use similar techniques to annihilate the old self and foster new personality types. Both criminals and officers follow rigid honour codes and keep their distance from civilians. This structurally produced gap between professional soldiers and civilians, if anything, widened in Hungary in the modern era. Professionalization increased segregation, while the ideology that buttressed this process encouraged officers to see themselves as physically and morally superior to the rest of the population. The officers' exulted view of themselves and their job clashed with the more negative perception of their profession by the general public, which continued to fear and distrust men in uniform. Some of this fear and distrust had political roots: in Hungary, the population historically associated the army with the alien Habsburg dynasty and with German domination. While in the decades before the Great War population may have become more friendly towards professional soldiers, as careers in the army became more available to both ethnic Hungarians and talented men of the middle and lower classes, the lost war and the revolutions, all of which implied the abuse of recruits by officers, reopened old wounds. Arbitrary violence and the requisition of goods both by Red and White military units only fostered the popular view that officers were essentially middle and upper-class criminals in uniforms.

### **Militia Violence as a Form of Profiteering**

As a result of enforced segregation, officers moved clumsily in the civilian world and tended to respond violently to any real or imagined threat to self-image and honour. Militia violence had multiple causes, and normlessness defined as the outcome of the growing gap between "culturally defined goals and socially approved means" was one of them. The post-war social and economic crisis touched the armed forces directly as officers complained bitterly about the inability of the government to provide their men with shelter, uniform, food and equipment.<sup>12</sup> The military tried to solve this crisis by wrenching up the violence against and by exploiting more the civilian population. Marxist historians grasped upon attacks on civilians as a proof that militia violence had been informed by class hatred and interest and that the rogue military units were doing the bidding of the elite. They were not entirely wrong: in dozens of cases the militias not only tortured and killed but also stole from poor peasants. One squad of the Prónay Battalion, for example, requisitioned

the grain of poverty-stricken estate servants in the village of Solt in the fall of 1919.<sup>13</sup> Yet, archival sources also show that the officers did not much care about the social background of their victims. In the village of Nagybjom, for example, Prónay's men emptied the cellars of the local tavern keeper, Mrs. Sándor Zavagyil.<sup>14</sup> They also stole pigs from the estate of a noble man in the vicinity of Debrecen. They injected the poor animals with morphine to prevent them from squeaking.<sup>15</sup> In short, the marauding troops if anything posed a greater threat to the relatively well-to-do, in the process reinforcing the traditional distrust by the civilian population of men in uniform — regardless of their class background.

Normlessness implied the transformation of values, the turning of allegedly selfless officers into armed criminals interested primarily in material gains. The leaders of the Prónay Battalion interpreted their privilege to requisition goods and equipment for military purposes broadly enough to enrich themselves. The Battalion seems to have worked out a system to steal motorcycles and automobiles. The chauffeur of the Battalion, János Kukucska, and two or three of his comrades, roamed the streets to gather information on vehicles and their owners. They reported their findings back to Lieutenant István Déván, an enforcer and infamous torturer of Jewish Hungarians. Déván, or someone of his ilk, then paid a visit to owners and, by using a transparent pretext, confiscated the vehicle. Sometimes, as in the case of Sándor Sándor, they encountered resistance. Sándor, the son of a wealthy Jewish businessman and a reserve lieutenant, was not prepared to part with his beloved Puch motorcycle. To save his vehicle, Sándor told Déván that the motorcycle was still registered in the name of his non-Jewish friend, First Lieutenant Károly Matuska. He even had the courage to call in the police to settle the dispute. However, the guardian of law and order, rather predictably, took Déván's side. Prónay's man then took the vehicle and brought it to the officers' headquarters in Hotel Britannia.<sup>16</sup>

The illegal confiscation of private vehicles created a public outrage among the well-to-do. In mid-1920, the Ministry of Defense, under pressure from the same group, ordered Prónay to hand over six cars and one truck (one Mercedes, one Opel, one Daimler, two Benz and one Sisere-Nandin) to the Ministry. It also demanded proof that the commanders of the Battalion were in legal possession of the vehicles they had been driving. At the time of the request, Prónay owned two, a Ford and a Puch, cars. His subordinate, First Lieutenant Iván Héjjas was driving a Ford, while Captain Victor Ranzenberger had a Stoewer. Prónay was also

asked to account for the Fiat that he had received the previous year from the Ministry.<sup>17</sup> Prónay had failed to obey the orders because two weeks later the Ministry repeated the request.<sup>18</sup> His men also seized the Mercedes of a Greek citizen of most likely Jewish descent, Mór Schlesinger, sometime in 1920 or early 1921. To add insult to injury, they forced to the hapless man to pay 39,600 *koronas* for repairing the car that his men had crashed after the seizure. On May 20, 1921, Gendarme Colonel Rákossy, Prónay's new boss, sent a letter to Prónay demanding the immediate transfer of the Mercedes to the Ministry of Defense. The request was repeated on June 14. Four days later the Battalion informed Rákossy that the car had been returned to the garage of the Ministry of Defense. On June 27, the Ministry of Defense responded that they had not seen the vehicle. The outcome of the affair is unknown, but it is clear from the correspondence that Prónay had been playing a cat and mouse game with the Ministry of Defense and had no intention of returning the car.<sup>19</sup> In September, the increasingly frustrated Ministry of Defense decreed that no battalion could have more than three cars and two motorcycles and that the commander of each battalion had to report directly to the minister about carrying out this decree.<sup>20</sup> In October the Ministry of Defense was forced to contact Prónay again about a car that they had confiscated from a liquor manufacturer. The administrator in charge demanded, most likely in vein, to hand over the vehicle, with as explanation of why they had confiscated it in the first place, to the Ministry or return it immediately to its original owner.<sup>21</sup>

Occasionally, primary documents shed lights on the motives and mood of the perpetrators in action. They suggest that Prónay's men saw their actions as a pranks and their motives and mood resembled those of school-yard bullies pulling practical jokes on fellow students and teachers. On November 20, 1920, four officers stopped a truck carrying gasoline on the street of Budapest. The truck and the four barrels of gasoline belonged to Imre Gergely, a Catholic leather manufacturer from Transylvania who had set up shop in Csepel, the manufacturing district of greater Budapest. Instead of a receipt the officers handed the driver a note that read: "Thank you very much and please come again." Gergely estimated his damage at 40,000 *koronas*, which represented a small fortune in 1920.<sup>22</sup> The prank had of course a very practical purpose: stolen vehicle used gasoline which was also in short supply after the First World War. The Prónay files in the military archive show that Gergely was not the Battalion's only victim: between October 1919 and September 1920, at least a dozen indi-



viduals and companies were forced to hand over to Prónay's men their gasoline supply for little or no compensation.<sup>23</sup>

The Prónay Battalion's large appetite was not satisfied with the confiscation of military equipment, food, vehicles and gasoline. In September 1920, a detachment seized three cabinets, six tables, six chairs and one bench from a Jewish school in Kecskemét. In vain did the leaders of the local Jewish community demand the return of school property. The right-wing mayor of Kecskemét also sided with Prónay's men by invoking a war-time emergency law to justify the robbery, which had taken place almost three years after the end of the military conflict.<sup>24</sup> Jews and civilians may have been the main but far from the only target of confiscation measures. In February 1920, Prónay's men, in collusion with the guards, broke into the storage room of famous Komárom fort, stealing the furniture of officers permanently stationed there.<sup>25</sup> The heyday of the militias came, however, during the border conflict with Austria in the fall of 1921. Exploiting the absence of legitimate authority in Burgenland, the contested border region between Hungary and Austria, the militia lined their pockets by acting as customs officers and by stealing cars, motorcycles, pianos, oriental carpets, jewellery, clothing and food from the heavily German local population.<sup>26</sup>

While the commanders focused their attention on luxury items, lower-ranked officers used every chance, no matter how small the promise of reward was, to take advantage of the civilian population. Officers, such as Lieutenant Zsigmond Hubert, ran up high tabs in hotels and restaurants. At Hotel Britannia, Hubert accumulated a 476 *koronas* debt, which, despite repeated warning from the head waiter, he refused to settle.<sup>27</sup> Political assignments also offered an excellent opportunity not only to vent aggression but also personally profit. Lieutenant György Schefnik, who led the arrest of László Szamuely, the brother of infamous Communist Commissar Tibor Szamuely, at the end of 1919, provides a perfect example of such opportunism. Schefnik and his men rummaged through Szamuely's flat during the arrest and stole many of his valuables in the process. Despite repeated warnings from his superiors, Schefnik and his men failed to return the stolen objects at least until April 1921.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, at bogus orders of their own creation, they broke into houses and took valuables with impunity. Thus, in January 1920, using a transparent political pretext, a squad of the Prónay Battalion raided the flat of Vilmos Horeczky on the Aréna Street in the heavily Jewish Seventh District of the city. During their search, they took jewellery and money in the value

of between 14,000 and 15,000 *koronas*. The wealthy and politically conservative Horeczky was confident enough to report the case directly to Admiral Horthy's office. The head of the National Army in turn ordered Prónay to return the stolen goods immediately. Unfortunately, I found no evidence as to whether Prónay carried out or, as he was prone to, ignored his superior's order.<sup>29</sup>

Anomie in a post-war context involved not only structural changes, such as a preference for charismatic rather than bureaucratic leadership, but also transfiguration of values. The militia members did not simply violate the honour codes of their profession but, both in lifestyle and ideological outlook began to resemble mobsters. The gap between ideology and officers' action had become unbridgeable: while ideologues continued to paint officers as men inexperienced and uninterested in business, the primary sources show that military officers were quite capable of drawing up and carrying out elaborate schemes. In November 1920, a civilian entered Manó Svirszki's candy shop in the Eötvös Street in Budapest. He introduced himself as József Kenéz, a seriously injured veteran of the war. Then he made a business proposition: he wanted to buy Svirszki's store and was prepared to pay 70,000 *koronas* for it. After some hesitation, Svirszki accepted what looked to him a generous offer; the business partners agreed to sign the contract in presence of an attorney the next day. Indeed, next day Kenéz handed over the attorney an envelope with 20,000 *koronas* as his pledge, and told Svirszki that the rest would follow after all the necessary paperwork had been completed. Satisfied, Svirszki returned to his flat where three men, two officers and one civilian, however, had been waiting for him. They arrested him on the charge of having sold his store at an unreasonably high price. Svirszki was taken to the officers' headquarter in Hotel Britannia and tortured repeatedly. With a bayonet pressed against his chest, he finally gave in and signed a paper acknowledging that he had sold his business to Kenéz for only 20,000 *koronas*, which he had already received. Svirszki was also forced to send a letter to his attorney, instructing him to hand over the envelope with the 20,000 *koronas* to the messenger. Svirszki's suffering did not come to an end with the loss of his livelihood. Emboldened by the success of their scheme, the officers demanded an extra 3,500 *koronas* from the unfortunate businessman "for their troubles." Under duress, Svirszki agreed but the officers then raised the price again to 100,000 *koronas*. They told him that he should not hesitate to accept their offer otherwise they, the officers, "would feel compelled to resort to more

forceful measures" both against him and his family members. Svirszki, at his wit's end, told the officer that he did not have that kind of money. Finally, the officers reduced the price to 10,000 *koronas*. Svirszki owed his life to an accident: the government troops and police squads, for reasons that had nothing to do with the tortured businessman, besieged Hotel Britannia in November 1920. In an effort to eliminate all incriminating evidence, the officers sneaked Svirszki out the back door. Encouraged by the government's action, Svirszki gathered enough courage to tell his story to the newspapers.<sup>30</sup>

The internment of political prisoners, in addition to the psychological payoffs, represented another opportunity for officers to enrich themselves. Officers, like Lieutenant Antal Molnár, at Prónay's order, toured the country, collecting information from local dignitaries, spies and informers and arresting "Communists and Communist sympathizers who pose a threat to peace, order and social stability." On the basis of these vague charges, he and his men arrested 33 individuals in the village of Fegyvernek and its vicinity in early June 1920.<sup>31</sup> Many of these detainees were brutally tortured and subsequently murdered by his men.<sup>32</sup> The following week, Molnár and his men visited his home town Szolnok and extorted between 50 and 60,000 *koronas*, which was a fortune at the time, from local Jews eager to avoid deportation, imprisonment and possible death.<sup>33</sup> The local military commander was so outraged by this event that he ordered the arrest of Molnár's brother and father as accomplices and also sent a letter to the military command in Budapest requesting the immediate detention of Antal Molnár.<sup>34</sup> What punishment Molnár received from Prónay remains unknown, however; in any case, it could not be serious because he remained a member of Prónay's entourage for the next two years.

The primary sources make it clear that the Prónay Battalion used politics to act out their ethnic prejudices, vent their aggression and, at the same time, steal from Jews. In Kiskunhalas, on May 13, 1920, three members of the Battalion ordered Sándor Schwartz to appear at the local police station. He was accused of having torn down a political poster or flyer of the National Army. It is unclear if they had advised Schwartz to bring 10,000 *koronas* as well or the hapless man just happened to carry the cash in his case. Be as it may, the money was duly confiscated, and Schwartz was allowed to return home. A few hours later, however, Prónay's men entered his house in search of more cash and valuables. They found the hapless Schwartz at home and beat him to death. Later in

the night, two of the three men, accompanied by a local policeman, broke into the home of another Jewish businessman, Mór Hofmeister. They spared Hofmeister's life in return for 5,000 *koronas* and some jewellery. They also forced him to hand over an additional 14,000 *koronas* the next day.<sup>35</sup>

House searches and the arbitrary arrests of middle and upper middle-class Jewish Hungarians were motivated by greed and ethnic and religious hatred; political considerations served either as a pretext or, as the following example suggests, as a retroactive justification only. On May 7, 1920, in the village of Abony, a squad of the Prónay Battalion broke into the house of a widow, Mrs. László Verhovay and forced her to hand over 1,600 *koronas*. The next evening, they forced their way into the home of Ignác Deutsch; under duress, Deutsch gave them 1,200 *koronas*, two pairs of gold earrings and a few pieces of collectors' coins. Militia men then raped the seventeen- years old Margit Deutsch and the servant girl, Róza Mucsi; they took the gold ring off the half-conscious Margit Deutsch's hand and stole her gold earrings as well. The same night, the gang ransacked the house of Manó Pick; they got away with 9,000 *koronas* in cash, 40 litres of rum, 20 litres of wine and a few kilograms of sweets. On May 28, the same group broke into the houses of Jakab Albert, Sámuel Rechtschaffer and Miksa Véii. They killed Sámuel Rechtschaffer and seriously injured Albert, whom they beat with a leaded stick. To their disappointment, however, the night netted only a few hundred *koronas*, two hand watches and other small valuables. Significantly, none of the victims had anything to do with Communism or with politics.<sup>36</sup>

### Relations with the Local Elite

Organizations, such as large businesses, tend to fulfil a wide variety of functions: some of these functions are legal, others operate in a morally and legally grey zone, while the rest are not only illegal but also harmful to the interests and wellbeing of the wider community. On the other end of the spectrum, the mafias tend to run not only illegal but also legal operations and sometimes even succeed in gaining public respect and official recognition. The rouge military units, such as the Prónay Battalion, similarly had a foot in both worlds. The militias survived until 1922 not only because they were made up by accomplished killers and bullies

but also because they fulfilled positive social functions and had roots in some communities. Unlike regular army units, the militias relied heavily on the material, moral and political support of individuals and social and professional groups. In return for their support, the militias often acted as patrons, advocates and arbiters of power struggles. In the village of Marczali, for example, Prónay's favourite was the local priest, András Tóth. He wrote regularly to Prónay, passing on information and denouncing municipal and county administrators as crypto-Communists or spineless opportunists. Tóth also asked Prónay to help him to get his former job back, a request that Prónay immediately forwarded to Horthy's office.<sup>37</sup> A year later, Prónay's right-hand man, Second Lieutenant Nándor Hertelendy, put pressure on the municipal council of Szentes to hire Tóth as a teacher. He told the council that Tóth had distinguished himself in the service of the counterrevolution. To extra weight to his recommendation, Hertelendy, however, also warned the civil servants that "if nice words do not do the job, well, then we will have to use something else." Outraged by this remark, the local notables denounced Hertelendy to General Kontz, the head of the gendarmes. General Kontz found no reason, however, to intervene and referred the case back to the battalion's commanders.<sup>38</sup>

In the chaotic circumstances of the post-war period, many individuals wanted to use the militias to cut through red tape and obtain unfair advantages. One of the most serious issues of the day was the lack of adequate housing, which, as the example of the sculptor Hugo Keviczky, who set his eyes on both the studio and the large flat of the famous Communist painter and cultural commissar Bertalan Pór, shows, could be solved by the militias. By playing up his nationalist credentials, Keviczky was able to get Pór's studio but not his adjacent apartment. The flat continued to be occupied by people whom Keviczky contemptuously described as Pór's "Galician-Jewish-Communist relatives." The right-radical newspaper, *Újlap* (New Paper) also came to Keviczky's aid. The *Újlap* told its readers that, while Communists, like Bertalan Pór, still owned two large houses in Budapest, men of such impeccable Christian and nationalist credentials and obvious talent as Keviczky, who had sculpted the legs of saints in the main Catholic Cathedral, the Basilica, in Budapest, had to live in a cramped apartment located in the outskirts of the city. The decision of the municipal government to deny Keviczky's request "violated the spirit of Hungarian nationalism because it favoured a guilty Communist émigré over an oppressed and much deserving

Christian artist.”<sup>39</sup> In the name of “true art and Hungarian natural culture,” Keviczky turned to Prónay and asked him to evict the present occupants, a family of five, from the coveted flat.<sup>40</sup>

The bureaucratic chaos and inefficiency, combined with the increased propensity of civilians to resort to violence in the aftermath of the war, forced in rare cases even Jews to turn to the militias for help. Miklós M. Lampel, a twenty-eight-year old Jewish wine merchant sought in vein to get back a large barrel from János Tarr. Tarr refused to return the barrel or provide compensation, by using the meek excuse: the barrel had been borrowed by his wife whom he had meanwhile divorced and the court had ruled that his ex-wife could not have more claim on him. The frustrated Lampel turned to the Prónay Battalion, because, as he later testified in the court, “I knew that the detachment could arrange everything quickly, and because by following the customary route I knew that I would never get my barrel back from Tarr.” Lampel asked First Lieutenant Éliás to pay a visit Tarr in his hometown, Cegléd, and impound his wife’s bracelet to cover all the expenses. At first everything seems to have gone according to plan: Éliás found Tarr in his vineyard in Cegléd and scared him into promising to return the barrel. Then he began bargaining with Tarr, demanding first 1000 *koronas* and then only 100 *koronas*. Tarr must have bought him off because in the end the barrel remained in Tarr’s possession. The hapless Lampel had no other option but to seek justice in the court.<sup>41</sup>

The militias were locked in a mutually profitable relationship not only with selected individuals, but also with communities and professional organizations. The village of Orgovány, for example, requested Prónay’s help for getting badly needed coal for the winter. In return they promised one wagon wheat as “a gift” next year, adding that they might give even more to “the best of the Hungarian soldiers” in the case of a good harvest.<sup>42</sup> In his letter, Prónay thanked the “upright Hungarians of Orgovány from the bottom of his Hungarian heart.” He warned that “in time like this we decent Hungarians have to stick together; we have to show iron will and stubborn determination and do everything in our power to prevent the repetition of the Red scandals of the recent past.” He then added that he had already talked to Gottlob Rauch, the Commissar for Coal Procurement, who promised to send two wagons of coal to Orgovány in October. In closing, Prónay expressed his wish that he and the villagers “would continue, shoulder-to-shoulder, their life-and-death-struggle against the enemies of our nation.”<sup>43</sup> In early July 1920, Prónay

asked the Ministry of Defense to not purchase goods from Jews or employ them as intermediaries. The Ministry, he argued, had to draw lessons from the lost war and the two revolutions. Instead of giving favours to "court Jews" (*udvari zsidók*), it should avail itself of the good services of the Baross Alliance, an umbrella organization of Christian artisans and shopkeepers, whose leaders he knew and whom he trusted because they had proven their loyalty to the counter-revolution.<sup>44</sup>

Among the right radical organizations, it was the Awakened Hungarians' Association (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete* or *ÉME*) that had the strongest ties with the Prónay Battalion. The leaders of the *ÉME* in Orgovány trusted their ties with Prónay enough to request the discharge of their members from military service.<sup>45</sup> In Pápa, *ÉME* members were infuriated by the arrest of Dr. Béla Zakos, a high school teacher and one of the leaders of the organization. Zakos was accused of providing support for the Communists before August 1919. The local landowner, Dr. Miklós Jókay, wrote Prónay a long letter on Zakos' behalf, asking him to facilitate his immediate release.<sup>46</sup> László Bokor, a right radical journalist and head of the *ÉME* in Szeged, begged Prónay to do the same for his friend and fellow *ÉME* member, First Lieutenant Tibor Farkas. He was detained on the order of by Major Shvoy for forcing the Gypsy violinist in a local tavern to play repeatedly the infamous anti-Semitic ditty, *Ergerberger*, and for resisting arrest by the military patrol.<sup>47</sup> Bokor described the whole incidence as the work of Jews and told Prónay that the local *ÉME* stood solidly behind Farkas.<sup>48</sup>

The boundaries between right radical civilian organizations and the militias were fluid: Prónay was one of the leaders of the *ÉME* and he and his men helped to establish and maintain *ÉME* cells in many communities. On the other hand, many *ÉME* members, especially university students but also local notables, served in the militias for a few months. Right radical civilian organizations provided the militias with material and, through their newspapers, schools and clubs, with moral support. In return, they used the rogue military units to carry out pogroms and settle scores with their local political adversaries. Thus, in an anonymous letter written in mid-July 1920, "the "Christian population of Fegyvernek" denounced the local physician, Dr. Zsigmond Klein, as a trouble maker. According to the letter, Klein spoke ill of the Prónay Battalion in public, calling the officers and rank-and-file of the unit murderers.<sup>49</sup> A week later, the local notables, including the village mayor, sent a second letter to Prónay. In it they informed Prónay that after the departure of his battal-

ion, Dr. Klein told the people around him that “these White bastards are responsible for everything; you can be sure that they will all end up on the gallows. I will not forget their faces and will tell the Russians everything so that each and every one of them will be hanged.”<sup>50</sup> The Prónay Battalion reacted to the letters of denunciation in their customary manner. On July 28, 1920, Dr. Klein’s remains were found in the outskirts of the village. The county physician, Dr. János Gimpel, noted the deep wound in the left side of Dr. Klein’s chest and blood stain on the back of his right hand. From this evidence, he concluded that Dr. Klein must have committed suicide.<sup>51</sup>

### **Conflict with Police and Military Authorities**

The murder of Dr. Klein and similar crimes must have provided local ÉME members with a certain degree of satisfaction. Grasping onto similar events, traditional Marxist historiography argued that the militias and the local elites not only shared the same interests but the rogue military units also acted as the latter’s puppets. Archival sources show that the relationship between the two was indeed very complex, and in many cases local gendarme and army officers and civil servants either looked the other way or actively encouraged the atrocities. However, the same sources also indicate that the relationship between the two groups was wrought with tension, and perhaps in the majority of cases local authorities, not to mention the wider population, were opposed to continued violence. As the following case studies demonstrate, traditional authorities were increasingly frustrated by the inability and unwillingness of militia members to observe the officers’ codes of conduct. Worse still, Prónay’s men often succeeded in turning what were essentially petty crimes into political events. On leave Lieutenant Molnár, for example, showed up uninvited at the ball of the local manufactures’ association in his home town Szolnok. The organization had many Jewish members and, to insult them, Molnár called on the Gypsy musicians to play the infamous anti-Semitic ditty “Ergerberger.” To the outraged organizer Molnár responded that “I am a member of both the ÉME and the Prónay Battalion; therefore, I can do anything.” Molnár also shrugged off the arriving police with the remark that “go to hell, you nothing, you lowly (közönséges) policemen.” He finally left the establishment screaming that “I am going to report every-



thing to Lieutenant-Colonel Prónay; you'll see, he will come down here and clean up this place."<sup>52</sup>

It seems that Prónay's men went out of their way to insult local policemen and military officers. In April 1920, lieutenants László Vannay and Árpád Ráth forbade a gendarme in the village of Solt to look into the pogrom, which their unit had committed only a few months earlier. They sent him back to the gendarme headquarters with the message that the gendarmes had no right to prevent attacks on Jews and if they had continued to insist on carrying out the investigation "they would be swept away along with the Jews."<sup>53</sup> In most cases, local gendarmes, who had come from peasant backgrounds and were therefore likely to be deferential towards officers of middle-class and often gentry background, simply complied with their orders. Yet, especially in larger towns and in the capital, police officers displayed more courage. Thus gendarme officer Lajos Labát Ligeti did not hesitate to arrest Ferenc Nagy for having started a brawl, even though Nagy told him that he would notify Prónay and with his help he would smash the entire gendarme unit.<sup>54</sup> The militias also stopped the car of a high-ranking police officer, Jánosy, in Budapest and told him to "get out of the car, you Jew and take your slut with you!" Jánosy neither forgot nor forgave the incident; a few days later he and fifteen of his policemen, dressed in civilian dress, prepared a surprise for the officers. The militia men entered a downtown café, frequented mainly by Jews, and demanded that the clients identify themselves by pulling down their pants. Jánosy and his men were not amused by the rough joke and arrested the trouble makers on the spot. The officers were transported to the district police headquarters, where they were severely beaten.<sup>55</sup>

By the summer of 1920, the police in Budapest had recognized the threat that the Prónay Battalion posed not only to the wellbeing of individual policemen but also to the survival of the new counter-revolutionary regime and, as the story of Reserve Lieutenant Vilmos Rácz shows, they were prepared to act. Vilmos Rácz was a gentleman farmer-turned-businessman, who operated a number of "theatres" in the main amusement park, the *Angol Park*, in Budapest. When the police closed down his theatres because he had failed to pay his fees on time, Rácz first had written a long letter to the police chief of Budapest, Dr. György Mattasovszky requesting a new permit. Having received no answer, he then paid a visit to Mattasovszky's assistant and told him that he was now going to turn to the Prónay Battalion as "the only forum where people

with a just cause were listened to." The increasingly agitated Rácz finally broke into Mattasovszky's office and gave him an ultimatum: either he issued a permit immediately or Rácz and the Prónay Battalion would "smash the Budapest police to pieces." The police chief "shrugged me off in the coldest possible manner," Rácz latter recalled the confrontation. Seething with anger, Rácz then sent his friends, István Balassa and István Csaba, both officers of the Prónay Battalion, to Mattasovszky to "demand an explanation." The two friends did not find the police chief at home but left him a message challenging him to a duel. However, Mattasovszky was in no mood for duelling. Instead he put Rácz behind bars and ordered the immediate detention of the two officers as witnesses to a crime. Then he placed the entire police force in the city on alert in expectation of a militia coup. As the air cleared the next few days with no coup having been attempted, the police chief decided to release Rácz on bail. The ex-lieutenant used his newly found freedom to write a long letter to the Ministry of Defense, denouncing Mattasovszky for failing to accept his challenge.<sup>56</sup> He also wrote a letter to Prónay explaining what had happened, asking for his continued support, and warning him that the whole case revolved around Mattasovszky's pathological hatred for the Prónay's Battalion, which was "thorn in his side."<sup>57</sup>

If the police increasingly saw militias "as a thorn in the side," local military commanders then had even more reason to complain, since the anti-social behaviour of Prónay's officers threatened their own reputation as officers. By behaving like bullies and issuing threats, Prónay's men, as the story of Lieutenant Rezső Schmidt shows, both embarrassed and made themselves hated by fellow officers. Schmidt disrupted a ball organized to honour local cadets in the town of Kecskemét by forcing the leading violinist to play only for him. Local officers got involved, put Schmidt in his place and thus the ball continued. Later in the night, however, the already drunken Schmidt jumped, or rather climbed, on the table and announced that, as a member of the Prónay Battalion, he had the right to have the Gypsy musician for himself. Taken to the balcony by fellow officers to get some cold air, Schmidt called the entire officer corps of the local Kecskemét regiment "destructive" and just before leaving the event challenged one of them to a duel.<sup>58</sup>

Schmidt's behaviour was ill suited to lowering tensions between the Prónay Battalion and regular army units, which in any case resented the favoured treatment that Prónay and his men received from Horthy. Just how poisoned the relationship between Prónay and many of local

commanders had become by the summer of 1920 can be seen from the weekly intelligence reports that Prónay sent to the Minister of Defense. Prónay used these reports to destroy the reputation and undermine the career of his colleagues. Thus he described Captain Rattinger, the military commander in Békés County as a one-time collaborator and Communist sympathizer. In the same letter, he called the head of the army unit in the town of Békéscsaba a "friend of Jews." While critical of high ranking officers, Prónay staunchly defended Lieutenant Huszka, his man on the ground. Huszka had a fallout with the local officers over the beating of a Romanian peasant whom he suspected of hiding arms. Prónay was infuriated by the soft-heartedness of his colleagues and demanded the reorganization of the military in Békés County on a strictly nationalist and anti-Semitic basis.<sup>59</sup>

The cause of tension between Prónay and the commander regular military units was not limited the lack of personal sympathies. In the final analysis, the conflict was rooted in differences in organizational structure and ideology: the militia leaders tended to be charismatic, while the commanders of regular army units practiced what Max Weber called a bureaucratic leadership style. The switch from charismatic to bureaucratic leadership style was, as the next case study suggests, difficult, if not outright impossible. Captain Kálmán Rácz, with Prónay's support, set up his own detachment recruited mainly from ex-soldiers in the Máramaros region at the end of 1919. The Detachment was to be used to re-occupy the newly separated region at the first favourable opportunity. In March 1920, at the order of the Ministry of Defense, the militia was integrated into a regular army unit, the Infantry Regiment of Mátészalka. At the first review, the Division Commander, Colonel Rubin asked Captain Rácz how he had been able to create such a disciplined unit. Captain Rácz replied that it was love and mutual trust between him and his soldiers that kept the unit together. Colonel Rubin's responded that "I spit on love and trust; what I need here is unconditional obedience." His remark was only the first of the many humiliations that the Detachment, according to Rácz, had to endure the following months. His officers especially resented Rubin's attempt to curtail political activities. On Rácz' and his officers' behalf, Prónay collected damaging information on Rubin and passed it on to the Minister of Defense. In one of his weekly intelligence reports, Prónay described Rubin as an inept professional and a spineless careerist. Rubin's incompetence, according to Prónay, caused the life of thousands of Hungarian soldiers at the Italian front during the last stage of the war.

Instead of being demoted, Rubin, thanks to his political skills and connections, moved further up on the bureaucratic ladder after the war. Still, his appointment as the Division Commander (*hadosztály parancsnok*) in Debrecen came as shock to everyone who had known him. Prónay closed the long litany of complaints about Rubin with the rhetorical question: "Why are we even pretending that the troops could ever come to trust such as a leader?"<sup>60</sup>

Archival sources make abundantly clear that regular army officers responded to Prónay's back-stabbing and intrigues in kind. By the end of 1920, rumours began to circulate in military circles about the imminent dissolution of the Prónay and the Osztenburg battalions. Regular officers, as the following short story shows, welcomed the news. A military patrol of the Abony-Zemplén Regiment questioned Lieutenant István Ö. Gyenes in the *Helvéczia* café in Budapest in November 1920. The leader of the patrol, Lieutenant Jenő Köröm, told Gyenes that he was going to take him into custody because "Prónay's men usually forge their identity papers." At the police station, Köröm made further inquiries, and in the end, in a disappointed voice, remarked to Gyenes, "so, after all, your battalion has not yet been dissolved." After his release, Gyenes reported this humiliating incident immediately to his superior.<sup>61</sup>

### **Relations with the Political and Military Elite**

Constant frictions with local administrators, policemen and army officers suggest that the militias, without a stable social base, could not take find their place in Hungarian society. Their greed and penchant for violence had an alienating impact not only workers and the agrarian poor but also on better-off peasants, professionals and civil servants. Unlike the fascist militias in Italy and the SA in Germany, the Prónay Battalion and similar units did not recognize the supremacy of any political party or movement. The logical choice of the militias in Hungary should have been the Christian Socialist movement, whose leaders shared Prónay's nationalism and violent racism and whose members were behind many pogroms after August 1919. Yet the movement lacked both strong leadership and cohesion, and soon became fragmented into a number of parties. Perceived by the entente powers as supporters of the Habsburg restoration, the Christian Socialist parties, moreover, did not have English and French

support, without which, no government could retain power for long in East Central Europe after The First World War.

Prónay was smart enough not to tie his fortunes to the Christian Socialist parties; he also made the right decision by supporting Horthy and the National Army against the various civilian, mainly Christian Socialist, governments in late 1919 and early 1920. In short, political calculation, distrust of civilian politicians, shared family and professional backgrounds and personal sympathies landed Prónay in Horthy's camp. He seems to have chosen well, since the Admiral was acceptable to Western powers and he shared Prónay's intense hatred of liberal and leftist politicians and the Jews. Yet, in the long run, Admiral proved to be a bad choice for Prónay. In his memoirs, Prónay painted Horthy as an intellectual lightweight, a babbler, a snob and an indecisive and somewhat spineless leader. This picture was more of caricature, since Horthy, his many weaknesses notwithstanding, did possess political talent. Unlike Prónay, Horthy at least recognized his limitations, and was wise enough to listen to his much better informed and more experienced advisors. After 1920, his circle of counsellors was increasingly dominated by conservative aristocrats. These advisors, like the socials group that they came from, were not interested in social and political experimentations; their goal was to restore, with minor modifications, the pre-war liberal-conservative system. In the fall of 1919, out of paranoia and as a form of retribution for Communist crimes, they tolerated and occasionally even encouraged state and militia violence against left-wing politicians and Jews. Interested in traditional domination rather than in power through direct violence, they tried to reduce and ultimately eliminate the atrocities as a feature of social and political life. Unlike Prónay and his officers, Horthy's aristocratic advisors had a more nuanced view of politics: they did not equate, for example, every liberal and socialist group with Communists. More moderate politicians, such as Prime Minister István Bethlen, were prepared to make concessions even to the Social Democratic Party in return for social peace, political toleration and entente support.<sup>62</sup> While Horthy would have liked to ignore socialist complaints about the White Terror altogether, he was smart enough not to close his ears to whispers coming from his moderate advisors and the representatives of the entente powers, both of which had expressed concern about the continued suppression of the socialist movement and the trade unions. The same can be said about militia violence against Jews. His dislike of the Jews notwithstanding, Horthy could not overlook the negative impact

of the pogroms on public opinions abroad and on the heavily Jewish entrepreneurial class at home.

The exclusion of the militias from political life took more than two years because the officers' detachments had powerful friends both in the army and the state bureaucracy. Horthy counted as one of their supporters, even though the militia leaders' influence over him was more limited than many contemporaries and later historians believed.<sup>63</sup> The members of the rough military units could always count on the Regent's sympathy: while he did not necessarily support or even know about the atrocities, Horthy regularly became involved on the militias' behalf by preventing the civil and military courts from prosecuting militia men and by ordering the immediate release of those arrested or already convicted of crimes. Just how close he must have been to the militia leaders can be sensed from Horthy's memoirs: written more than thirty years after the events, in it the ex-regent of Hungary continued to make excuses for the murderers.<sup>64</sup>

Horthy and his political and military advisors were slow to get rid of the militias for a number of other reasons as well. First, they overestimated the power of the Left and remained paranoid about Communist coups. Second, the elite had a use for the militias in their multi-dimensional political game: the rogue military units with their well-known penchant for violence were well suited to frighten political opponents, ensure the desired outcome of elections and kept workers and peasants in their place. The members of the elite, Horthy included, were not ashamed to ask for the same kind of personal favours that helped to forge the alliance between the local elite and the militias. According to Prónay's memoirs, Horthy once asked him to recover some of his goods lost during the Communist regime. Horthy's advisor, Gyula Gömbös, and his *aide-de-camp*, László Magasházy, allegedly requested his help to beat up the Minister of the Interior Ödön Beniczky and other legitimists politicians.<sup>65</sup> The officers' detachments served a representative function as well: young and relatively good looking officers preferably from gentry background were often asked to serve as bodyguards, protect important sites and accompany Horthy and his trusted advisors, including the conservative István Bethlen, on longer trips. Finally, as mentioned above, there were cultural affinities reinforced by similar social origins, shared upbringing and family, friendship and professional ties that made the break with the militias especially painful for Horthy and some of his advisors.

It was the decreasing need for the militias as enforcers and bodyguards, combined with the fear of a right-wing coup, rather than moral outrage over militia crimes that put an end to the collaboration between the conservatives and members of the extreme Right. By the fall of 1921, the political and military elite had become as paranoid about a possible right-wing takeover of power as they had been about communist plots at the end of 1919. While not eager to provoke a confrontation, by the fall of 1921, the government felt strong enough to confront the militias by relying on regular army and police units.

The government's reluctance to confront the militias shows the depth of the economic, social, political and moral crisis in Hungary after the lost war the failed revolutions. The government sought to domesticate the militias by both gradually trimming their power and changing their structure. Both measures had produced, until the end of 1921, only limited results, as the quarrel over military intelligence demonstrates.

In the fall of 1919, the National Army created its own intelligence service to deal with domestic, mainly Communist, threats.<sup>66</sup> This intelligence function was essentially abrogated by the Prónay and the Osztenburg detachments, which, by using their network of spies, arrested, tortured and murdered people in large numbers. To end the abuse of power by the two battalions, in May 1920, the new Minister of War, General Károly Soós, proposed the creation of a central intelligence agency under the direct control of his ministry. This proposal, however, also led to a fight between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, which wanted to reclaim what it perceived to be a police prerogative from the military. The Ministry of Defense in the end got its way by creating the Centre for Defense against Bolshevism (vörösvédelmi központ) under its tutelage.<sup>67</sup>

On June 11, 1920, bureaucrats in the Ministry of the Interior held a high-level meeting to deal with the public outcry over the continued arrest and imprisonment of innocent civilians by the militias. They decided to put an end to the military's intelligence service. The relevant decree by the Ministry of the Interior (4710/1920.ME.) was published in the *Budapesti Közlöny* on June 13, 1920. The law forbade military units to arrest and interrogate civilians. On June 13, 1920, as a reaction to the new law, the Minister of Defense met with his close advisors to discuss the issue of military intelligence. They concluded that military intelligence units had produced too many important results and "in spite of the mistakes of a few young officers, and the atrocities committed by non-

military elements," it would be a mistake to put an end to their operation. Determined to keep the power of the military intact, Soós issued a new law (1010.215/el.n.C.1920.) on June 17: he renamed the Centre for Defense against Bolshevism the Information (tájékoztató) Service without, however, seriously cutting its prerogatives.<sup>68</sup>

Resolute to maintain its intelligence service, the army leadership nevertheless recognized the need to curb the power of Prónay and the Osztensburg battalions. In the summer of 1920, both the Minister of Defense (H.M. 100951/el.n. Sz. rendelet), and the District Military Command (5082 Sz. rendelet) decreed that the Prónay and the Osztensburg battalions had no longer had the right to operate separate intelligence services; battalion members who worked on intelligence matters had to report directly to the Army's newly-renamed Information Service. The power of the Service became more circumscribed, too: it could no longer prosecute currency smugglers and speculators, and had to coordinate its intelligence operations against Communists closely with civilian authorities.<sup>69</sup> A separate decree by the District Military Command ordered the two battalions to refrain from arresting "politically dangerous individuals and those engaged in illegal economic activities." The document made reference to the militia practice to arrest and keep in prison individuals without due recourse to the courts of law. These activities, the order reads, added extra ammunition, both at home and abroad, to enemy propaganda about the White Terror. The military authorities gave the militias credit for their past achievements; they also warned them, however, to leave intelligence gathering and arrest to the appropriate authorities.<sup>70</sup>

The fact that the order had to be repeated with minor changes several times suggests that the two militia units had no intention of giving up profitable and emotionally satisfying police powers. In November of 1920 the Ministry of Defense issued a new decree; in it, the Ministry admitted that measures taken to limit the intelligence and police functions of the militias had been a failure and that excesses committed by military detectives had remained common. The order stipulated that militia detectives could arrest only renegade soldiers, people who incited against conscription, spies and Communists; and that the arrest could proceed only on the basis of solid evidence. Military detectives were allowed to detain people only for 48 hours; after two days, they were obliged to release or hand them over to civilian authorities. The Ministry also sought to limit the power of officers to patrol streets and ask for identification



cards; only officers with special orders were allowed to carry out police duties. They had no right to confiscate anything from the detainees.<sup>71</sup>

The order by District Military Command in Budapest a few weeks later displayed even greater frustration with the militias. The District Military Command deplored the fact its earlier decrees forbidding political activity among officers "have not been correctly understood." Officers had not stopped spreading rumours, denouncing one another and intriguing against their superiors. Worse, some military units had built up a veritable spy system. These activities reflected a revolutionary mindset and therefore had to come to an end. Officers who were not able to keep their subordinates in line and those who set a negative example for their men had no place in the armed forces of Hungary. To avoid ambiguity about the continued existence of intelligence operations, General Dáni declared that that "I do not tolerate the existence of a spy system (*spiclirendszer*) in the army."<sup>72</sup>

The government sought to trim the power of the militias and effect structural changes in order to end the atrocities. In early April of 1920, the Office of the Supreme Commander ceased to exist and its prerogatives were transferred to the Ministry of the Defense. Whereas the new Minister of Defense, General Károly Soós, had the reputation of being a man of the radical Right, his actions show that, as professional soldier, he opposed the militias. On June 16, 1920, in a parliamentary speech, he announced the reorganization of the militias: the provincial militias were to be integrated into the gendarmerie, while the militias in Budapest would remain under military command. Officers' detachments were to be dissolved with the exception of the Prónay and the Osztenburg battalions, which would remain under military control. In January 1921, the two units were reorganized as the first and second national gendarme reserve battalions and as such they became part of the gendarmerie.<sup>73</sup> Simultaneously the Prónay and the Osztenburg battalions lost their representative function. In mid-February 1921, as an indication of growing distrust towards the militias, Prónay's men were replaced by regular gendarmes to guard the royal residence, Horthy's favourite place, in Gödöllő.<sup>74</sup>

The Ministry of Defense felt the need to address the matter of Prónay Battalion in a separate order. In September 1920, the Ministry of Defense decreed (Hon. Min. f. évi 78687/el. n. A. 1920. szám) the immediate dissolution of the officers' squad stationed in Hotel Britannia. The same order put an end to the counter-intelligence operation of the Battal-

ion. To make the battalion more compatible with regular infantry units, the Ministry of Defense sought to reduce the number of officers as well. Each company of the Battalion was allowed to have only ten officers. The percentage of officers was to be reduced by integrating those on assignment permanently into their present units, by transferring non-infantry officers to different battalions and by prohibiting the recruitment of new officers without higher authorization. The Ministry declared that only those who had been the members of the battalion before August 2, 1919 should remain with the Prónay battalion. This implied a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the number of officers, since the unit had at least 180 officers in September 1920, as compared to 70 in August 1919. The entire battalion, officers included, was to stay in the Ferdinand military base. To improve discipline and morale, the Ministry ordered Prónay's men to attend lectures on military discipline on weekdays.<sup>75</sup> A separate decree radically cut the number of reserve officers in the militia. At the end of 1920, the Ministry of Defense set the date for the discharge of reserve officers by January 15, 1921; then it extended the date to February 15.<sup>76</sup> The decrees of the District Military Command in Budapest reflected the same mindset: in April 1921, the District Military Command ordered officers stationed in the city to attend lectures on proper behaviour towards civilians. The lectures were to be held every Friday morning in the Officers' Casino in Váci Street.<sup>77</sup>

The frequent recurrence and duplication of the same orders at different levels of the military speak volumes about the difficulties the government faced in reining in the militias. In February 1920, the Osztenburg Detachment, by taking one of Horthy's thoughtless remarks literally, murdered Béla Somogyi, the editor-in-chief of the socialist newspaper, *Népszava* (People's Voice), and his young colleague, Béla Bacsó. This murder angered both domestic and foreign public opinion and led to an ill-conceived, short and ineffective economic blockade of Hungary in the early summer. In mid-June, government was finally forced to take action: it cleansed the Budapest-Kecskemét railway line of the members of the Héjjas Detachment who had been harassing passengers and also rounding up scores of young men in the area "who abused the uniform of the National Army." The campaign meant to satisfy public opinion without insulting the militias. To square the circle, Horthy appointed Prónay to lead the cleansing campaign and determine who among those arrested should be charged. Since the Héjjas Detachment had closely co-operated with Prónay for months, and many of its members,

including Lieutenant Iván Héjjas himself, later entered the Prónay Battalion, the campaign predictably produced meagre results. To make sure that no important militia member would be charged, Horthy, moreover, put an abrupt end to the investigation at the end of July.

These fake measures failed to stem the flood of complaints or reverse the course of events. In August, for the first time, the court imposed heavy sentences on the members of an entire militia group for killing a lawyer and bank manager at the end of July. In November, as a reaction to the murder of a policeman by drunken officers, government troops raided Hotel Britannia, which housed officers of the Prónay Battalion and associated units, and the Ehmann military base: the raid led to the arrest of more than a dozen of officers at Hotel Britannia, while the skirmish with government troops on the base produced five deaths and scores of injuries. As part of the crackdown, the government, fearful of a right-wing coup, imposed a curfew, dissolved a number of radical organizations and arrested their leaders.

The government crackdown in November weakened but did not yet destroy the militias. In the summer of 1921, Iván Héjjas sent an ultimatum to the Minister of the Interior of the previous government, Ödön Bericzky. As the ultimatum provoked a great public outrage and Parliament demanded an investigation. A special prosecutor in the person of Albert Váry was appointed to look into the atrocities committed by Héjjas and his gang. Indeed, within a few weeks, Váry produced a list containing the names of more than 70 people murdered on the basis of racial and religious hatred and greed. He could not make any arrests, however, because Héjjas and his men had left the region for Burgenland to participate in an insurrection aimed at keeping the province under Hungarian rule.

Meanwhile Héjjas' one-time commander, Prónay, also came under fire. In August 1921, in response to newspaper allegations that he had extorted money from a rich Jewish businessman, Lajos Kornhauser, Prónay sent a threatening letter to the President of Parliament, István Rakovszky. He accused him, among other things, of being a traitor and a Czech spy. Prime Minister István Bethlen used the Kornhauser Affair to destroy Prónay. After a humiliating trial, Prónay received a light sentence for having insulted the President of the Parliament, and was deprived of his unit. Deeply hurt, Prónay withdrew from public affairs to his family estate. Unable to give up the limelight, however, in the fall he had joined the nationalist uprising in Burgenland and soon became its self-appointed

leader. Prónay did not support the second royalist coup at the end of October, even though recent political events made him to lean in that direction. His neutrality, however, failed to endear him to the holders of power in Budapest, while his stubbornness to leave the province raised the spectre of entente sanctions. Having run out of options, the Bethlen government was prepared to use military force against Prónay's and Héjjas' units and only their last minute withdrawal from the region saved them from destruction.<sup>78</sup> Still, as a sign of his sympathy for Prónay, Horthy offered the discredited militia leader a minor position in the army. In early November, as an additional favour, he declared full amnesty for the crimes the militias had committed since August 1919.

Predictably, Prónay was not impressed by these goodwill gestures but wanted full rehabilitation and control over his troops. The government was, however, no longer in the mood to negotiate: instead of giving back his troops, the Bethlen government, under pressure from the military elite, the civil service, local elite, trade unions and foreign governments, dissolved the last militias in early 1922. Using the reorganization of the army in the aftermath of the Treaty of Trianon, which ordered a drastic reduction in the size of the armed forces, as a pretext, the commander of the National Army, General Pál Nagy prevented militia men from entering the army and the gendarmerie in every turn. Officers with criminal records were eliminated on the spot; reserve officers, despite distinguished war records, were accepted only in exceptional cases. Most importantly, Nagy used the Treaty as an excuse to cleanse the army of politically unreliable elements, which in his interpretation included not only leftist sympathizers and legitimists but also members of the most prominent militias.<sup>79</sup> By 1923, the militias and their supporters in right-radical organizations, such as the ÉME, had found themselves outside the gates of power. Their desire and determination to re-enter that gate, either by themselves or as allies of other political movements, remained one of the most important factors in interwar Hungarian history.

### **Concluding Remarks: Modernity and Violence**

Contemporary liberal and leftist commentators and later historians described the officers who had dominated the Prónay and the Osztenburg Battalions either as feudal remnants or as stooges of capitalists and semi-

feudal landowners eager to restore the pre-war social and political order both in the cities and the countryside. This view is untenable on many grounds: regular officers, despite their feudal decorum, were essentially modern professionals. Reserve officers came from the middle class; they had finished high school, and many had attended university. In their outlook and culture they were more modern and also more European than the majority of the population. The Prónay and, to a lesser extent, the Osztensburg battalions were envisioned by Admiral Horthy and his advisors as elite units, and they were treated as such for more than two years. The members of the detachments wore military uniforms and displayed military decorations; they drew salaries from the state and attended and often played a major role in official ceremonies. Until the end of 1921, paramilitary leaders rubbed shoulders with leading politicians, who sought their advice and were not yet embarrassed to appear with them in public. The Prónay and the Osztensburg battalions were housed in military barracks; the life of soldiers and officers on these military bases followed rigid schedules passed down from the old army. In their free time, the officers frequented the same restaurants, casinos and brothels; they attended the same theatre performances, listened to the same type of music, read, if they read at all, the same type of literature and subscribed to the same nationalist newspapers. The officers of the Prónay and the Osztensburg battalions subscribed to the same nationalist ideology and harboured the same prejudices towards ethnic and religious minorities as the majority of their colleagues and indeed a large part of the elite and the so-called Christian middle class. The Prónay and the Osztensburg detachments may not have been the best units of the newly formed National Army, as they themselves believed and as they were often told by military and political leaders. But they were soldiers, and their behaviour can be best understood in the context of the state of their profession during and after the war.

Violence against defenceless civilians did not make the officers less professional: after all, there was hardly any army and offices corps in modern Europe that did not violate the norms of their professions during foreign and civil wars. The atrocities committed by regular German troops in Belgium and the behaviour of Russian units in East Prussia and Austro-Hungarian soldiers in Italy during the First World War underlined, perhaps the first time, the ambiguous impact of professionalization on military-civilian relations. The complicity of the German army in the murder of civilians in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and their participa-

tion in the Jewish genocide during the Second World War made this problem even more salient. Yet every army, including those of the Western states, committed unspeakable crimes against humanity during the Second World War. As if the problem had not been clear enough, the senseless murder of civilians both by conscripted and professional armies continued during decolonization. The death of tens of thousands of Iraqis and the torture of civilians at Abu Ghuraib prison and in secret CIA facilities all over the globe suggest that neither the nature of the war nor the nature of soldiers and policemen have changed much for the better the last hundred years.

In post-World War One Hungary, the militias' tendency to ignore professional codes of conduct can be attributed to the lost war and the two failed revolutions. The breakdown of state bureaucracy, unprecedented misery, lack of respect for human life and dignity, as well as the general lawlessness that prevailed in the country, created the ideal conditions for the emergence of the militias. The roots of militia violence was anomie produced by socio-economic strains and decline in respect for human life and the rule for law, which transformed regular army units into criminal enterprises. The militias, like the most criminally-minded of all businesses, the mafias, fulfilled a wide variety of functions, some of which benefited at least some segments of the population. Yet the militias, like the mafias, were also too violent and too unpredictable and too much the product of the post-war crisis to become a permanent feature of the political and social landscape. The militias had to disappear from the scene because they violated too many interests and sensitivities. Their belated removal from the scene in 1922 allowed the conservative-liberal regime to survive until 1944.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See György Ránki *et al.*, *Magyarország Története, 1918-1945*, 8/1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978), 395-434; Ervin Hollós and Vera Lajtai, *Horthy Miklós: A fehérek vezére* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1985), 259-280; Lóránd Dombrády and Sándor Tóth, *A magyar királyi honvédség, 1919-1945* (Budapest: Zrínyi Katonai Kiadó, 1987), 15-17. Other works include: Dezső Nemes, *Az ellenforradalom története Magyarországon, 1919-1921* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962); György Borsányi, ed., *Páter Zadravecz titkos naplója* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1967); Rudolfné Dósa, *A Move. Egy jellegzetes magyar fasiszta szervezet* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1972); Ferenc Pölös-

kei, *Horthy és hatalmi rendszere 1919-1920* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977); and Tibor Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora 1919-1923* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989). The least politically committed book is Ignác Romsics, *A Duna-Tisza köze hatalmi viszonyai 1918-1919-ben* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Sakmyster, *Admirális fehér lovon: Horthy Miklós, 1918-1944* (Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 2001), 37-93; Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 110-116; Mária Ormos, *Magyarország a két világháború korában, 1914-1945* (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 1998), 56-85.

<sup>3</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt & Brace & World, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Kovács tiszthelyettes, körmendi őrs, M. kir. szombathelyi csendőr-kerület, Körmend, 1920 július 27, Hadtörténeti Levéltár (HL), Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>5</sup> Béla Bodó, "Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War," *East European Quarterly*, 38, 2 (June 2004): 129-172.

<sup>6</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Societal Theory and Social Structure* (London, 1968), 185-248. For the application of this theory to peasant culture in Hungary in the interwar period, see Béla Bodó, *Tiszazug: A Social History of a Murder Epidemic* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), 172-179.

<sup>7</sup> Ernő Prost, M. kir. I. vadász zászlóalj. A Zászlóaljparancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1920 június 17, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>8</sup> A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelőjének ügyésze. Tárgy: Kmetty Károly főhadnagy és társa elleni ügy. A m. kir. I. számú országos csendőrtartalék zászlóalj parancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1921 szeptember 13, HL 122 doboz.

<sup>9</sup> Bucsi György rendőr, Budapesti m. kir. államrendőrség. Jelentés. Budapest, 1921 február 16, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>10</sup> M. kir. csendőrség felügyelőjének ügyésze. A m. kir. I. országos csendőr tartalékszászlóalj parancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1921 augusztus 31, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>11</sup> James Gilligan, *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), 114.

<sup>12</sup> Anton Lejár, *Erinnerungen: Gegenrevolution und Restaurationsversuche in Ungarn 1918-1921* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1973), 156-157.

<sup>13</sup> Kontz tábornok. A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelője. Határozat. Budapest, 1921 április 8, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Schmitz hadbíróalezredes, ügyész. Határozat. Budapest, 1921 május 6, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>15</sup> Ágnes Szabó and Ervin Pamlényi, eds., *A határban a halál kaszál: Fejezetek Prónay Pál feljegyzéseiből* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1963), 231.

<sup>16</sup> Déván István hadnagy. Jegyzőkönyv, Budapesti törzsszázad parancsnokság, 1920 június 9, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>17</sup> M. kir. honvédelmi minisztérium 68762 szám/eln.26-1920. M. kir. szegedi vadász zlj. panacsnokságának, Budapest, 1920 június 28, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>18</sup> Szabó főhadnagy, M. kir. autópótár parancsnokság, M. kir. Szegedi vadász zlj. parancsnokságnak, Budapest 1920 július 15, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>19</sup> Rákossy ezredes. A magyar királyi csendőrség felügyelője. A magy. kir. 1. számú országos csendőr tartalék zászlóalj parancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1921 május 20; június 14 és június 27, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>20</sup> Dáni, budapesti katonai körletparancsnok, Szám 9052.főnöki -1920. Szegedi vadászászlóalj átszervezése, Budapest, 1920 szeptember 18, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>21</sup> Márkus ezredes, M. kir. Honvédelmi Minisztérium. A Magyar kir. Szegedi vadászászlóalj parancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1920 október 27, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>22</sup> Olvashatatlan aláírás. Büntügyi Kiadó. Jegyzőkönyv. Budapest, 1920 november 20, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>23</sup> A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelője. A m. kir. I. számú országos csendőrtartalék zászlóalj parancsnokságnak, Budapest, 1921 szeptember 7, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>24</sup> Kecskeméti izr. Hitközösség előljárósága. A szegedi 1. vadászászlóalj különítménye tekintetes Parancsnokságának. Kecskemét, 1920 szeptember 30, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.; Kecskemét város polgármestere. A m. kir. szegedi vzlj. visszamaradó különítmény parancsnokságának. Kecskemét, 1920 október 8, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Schmitz hadbíróalezredes, ügyész. A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelőjének ügyésze. Határozat. Budapest, 1921 május 18, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.



<sup>26</sup> Rákossy ezredes. A kir. csendőrség felügyelője. 947 szám. Eln. Csfu.1921. Bizalmas. A m. kir. l. számú csendőr tartalék paracsnokságnak. Budapest, 1921 november 27, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadász-zászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>27</sup> Beer László főpincér. A Magy. Kir. Szegedi I. vadász zlj. nyomozó osztályának. Budapest, 1920 August 1, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>28</sup> Kontz hadbíró alezredes. Schefcsik György főhadnagy elleni ügy. Budapest, 1921 április 6, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>29</sup> Wittenbarth főhadnagy. Szolgálati jegy, Budapest, 1920 január 5, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>30</sup> *Népszava*, November 12, 1920

<sup>31</sup> Molnár Főhadnagy, Szolgálati jegy, Fegyvernek, 1920, június 11, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Schmitz. A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelőjének ügyésze. Határozat. Budapest, 1922 május 16, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>33</sup> Jegyzőkönyv, Magyar kir. Nemzetvédelmi aloszt. Szolnok, 1920 június 18, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>34</sup> Szolnok vármegye m. kir. katonai paracsnokság, védelmi osztály, 1718 szám/kt.1920. Magy. Kir. Budapesti katonai körletparacsnokság ügyészsége, Budapest 1920 június 20, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadász-zászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>35</sup> Dr. Schmitz. Hadb.ezredes. ügyész. Nyomozó és elfogató parancs. Budapest, 1921 szeptember 2, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadász-zászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Schmitz. Hadb.ezredes. ügyész. Nyomozó parancs. Budapest, 1921 szeptember 5, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>37</sup> Prónay. Heti jelentés. 1920 június 1-június 9. Magyarország Kormányzójának Katonai Irodájához, Budapest, 1920 június 9, HL 121 doboz.

<sup>38</sup> Kontz tábornok. Határozat. Budapest, 1921 április 9, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>39</sup> *Újlap*, 1920, February 18

<sup>40</sup> Keviczky Hugó szobrászművész. A Szegedi vadász zlj. paracsnokságának, Budapest, 1920 május 25, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 121 doboz.

<sup>41</sup> Lampel M. Miklós. Kihallgatási Jegyzőkönyv. Budapest, 1920 aug. 22; Tarr János. Kihallgatási Jegyzőkönyv. Budapest, 1920 aug. 22., HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120. doboz.

<sup>42</sup> Orgovány népe. Méltóságos Szeretett Őrnagy Urunk! Orgovány, 1920 szeptember (?), HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>43</sup> Prónay. Érdemes Előljáróság. Budapest, 1920 szeptember 15, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>44</sup> Prónay, Heti Jelentés, Budapest, 1920 július 1-8, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 121 doboz.

<sup>45</sup> Illés Gergely. ÉME jegyző. Méltóságos Prónay Pál alezredes úr! Orgovány. Dátum nélkül. HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Jókay Miklós, főszolgabíró és földbirtokos, Devecser, 1920, május 28, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>47</sup> The anti-Semitic ditty ran: Erger, Berger, Schlossberger, /Minden zsidó gazember./Akár bankár, akár más,/Kenyere a csalás. In Tim Wilkinson's translation: Ebenezer Grün or Cohen, /Every Jew's a dirty con./Whether banker or greengrocer,/His bread is won by means not kosher." See Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, p. 111.

<sup>48</sup> Bokor László hirlapíró. Mélyen Tisztelt Őrnagy Úram, Szeged, 1920, június (?), HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120. doboz.

<sup>49</sup> Fegyverneki magyar keresztény lakossága. M. kir. Szegedi 1. vadász zlj. parancsnokának, Fegyvernek, 1920 július 17, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>50</sup> Ungvári József tanácsos, Ungvári István bíró, Vitéz Lajos rendőr. M. kir. szegedi vadász zlj. Jegyzőkönyv. Fegyvernek, 1920. Július 24, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120. doboz.

<sup>51</sup> Dr. Gimpel János főorvos. M. kir. Szegedi vadász zlj. Orvosi látlet. Budapest, 1920 július 28, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120. doboz.

<sup>52</sup> Hammer (?) Árpád. Magyar katonai állomás parancsnokság Szolnok. Feljelentés kihágási ügyben. Szolnok, 1920 október 31, HL, 122 doboz.

<sup>53</sup> Dr. Schmitz. A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelőjének ügyésze. A magyar királyi 1. számú országos csendőrtartálék zlj. parancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1921 szeptember 27, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Schmitz. A m. kir. csendőrség felügyelőjének ügyésze. Határozat. Budapest, 1921 június 8, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 123 doboz.

<sup>55</sup> József Pogány, *A fehér terror Magyarországon* (Vienna: Arbeiter Buchhandlung, 1920), 93-94.

<sup>56</sup> Kürti Csaba. A Magyar kir. Honvédelmi Minisztérium Elnöki C. III. Alosztályának, Budapest, 1920 július 16, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Vilmos Rácz. Beadvány. A magyar kir. szegedi I. vadász zlj. parancsnokságnak. Budapest, 1920, július 20, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 121 doboz.

<sup>58</sup> Pásky János hadnagy. M. kir. Délpestvármegyei kat. parancsnokság. A m. kir. Kat. állomás parancsnokságának, Kecskemét, 1920 augusztus 31, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>59</sup> Prónay. Heti jelentés. 1920 július 1- 8, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 121 doboz.

<sup>60</sup> Adatok Rubin vk. Ezredesről. Aláírás Lékány és Prónay. Budapest 1920 június (?), HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 121 doboz.

<sup>61</sup> Ö. Gyenes István hdj. M. kir. Szegedi vadászlj. Jegyzőkönyv. Budapest, 1920 november 14, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>62</sup> See Tom Lorman, "István Bethlen and the 1922 Elections in Hungary," *SEER*, 80, 4 (October 2002): 624-655; Ignác Romsics, *Bethlen István* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), 174-184; 206-209; Balázs Ablonczy, *Teleki Pál* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), 169-182.

<sup>63</sup> Dezső Sulyok, *A magyar tragédia*, New Brunswick, 1954, 254-258.

<sup>64</sup> Miklós Horthy, *Emlékirataim* (Budapest: Europa Könyvkiadó, 1990), 124, 130-132, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Szabó and Pamlényi, *A határban a halál kaszál*, p. 252; 237-238.

<sup>66</sup> Horthy utasítása a körletparancsnokságoknak a "vörösvédelmi" kémiszolgálat országos kiépítéséről, November 4, 1919, HL.MNHF. Bp. kat. körlet.psg.-1919-187.eln. In Dezső Nemes, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez. Az ellenforradalom hatalomrajutása és rémuralma Magyarországon, 1919-1921* (Budapest: Szikra, 1953), 211-212.

<sup>67</sup> Soós hadügyminiszter minisztertanácsi előterjesztése a kommunista ellenes kém-és terrorszervezetek egységesítéséről, May 3, 1920, in Nemes, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez*, p. 357.

<sup>68</sup> Say alezredes bizalmas jelentése a tisztí különítmények és a védelmi szervek működésének módosításáról, June 17, 1920, In Nemes, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez*, 368-369.

<sup>69</sup> M. kir. budapesti gyalog hadosztály parancsnokság 4038 sz/kat. 1920. Katonai nyomozók működésének beszüntetése. A M. kir. Szegedi vadász zlj. parancsnokságának, Budapest, 1920. június 17. HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>70</sup> M. kir. budapesti gyalog hadosztály parancsnokság 4040 sz/kat. 1920. Gyanús polgári egyének letartóztatása. A M. kir. Szegedi vadász zlj. parancsnokságának, Budapest, 1920. június 17. HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>71</sup> Dáni, Budapesti körletparancsnok. Szám: 12372/főnöki 1920. Katonai nyomozók eljárására szigorú utasítások. Budapest, 1920 november 1, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>72</sup> Dáni tábornok. Budapesti katonai körletparancsnok. 13070/el. 1902. szám. Budapest, 1920 november, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>73</sup> Lóránd Dombrády and Sándor Tóth, *A magyar királyi honvédség, 1919-1945* (Budapest: Zrínyi Katonai Kiadó, 1987), 15-16.

<sup>74</sup> Láng ezredes. Magyarország kormányzóságának katonai irodája. 641. szám. K.I. 1921. Gödöllőn levő szegedi v. zlj. legénységének felváltása. Budapest, 1921 február 16, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 122 doboz.

<sup>75</sup> Dáni, budapesti katonai körletparancsnok, Szám 9052.főnöki -1920. Szegedi vadászászlóalj átszervezése, Budapest, 1920 szeptember 18, HL, Horthy-kori csapatanyag, Szegedi vadászászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, 120 doboz.

<sup>76</sup> Dáni tábornok. Magyar kir. budapesti kat. körlet parancsnokság. 850/II szám/ eln.-1921. Tartalékos tisztek leszerelése. Budapest, 1921 január 17, HL, 122 doboz.

<sup>77</sup> Budapesti városi parancsnokság. Fegyelmező gyűlések.... Budapest, 1921 április 10, HL 122 doboz.

<sup>78</sup> Dombrády and Tóth, *A magyar királyi honvédség, 1919-1945*, p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.