Nationalist Masculinity and Right-Wing Radical Student Movements in Interwar Hungary: The Case of the Turul Association

Róbert Kerepeszki

**Turul** was the most significant Hungarian student association during the interwar period. In the origin myth of the Magyars (the Hungarian people) the *turul* was a divine messenger in the body of a great bird-of-prey that symbolized power, strength and nobility.¹ By the end of the 1930s, Turul had more than hundred branches throughout the country, representing a predominant majority among the youth organizations, with a membership exceeding forty thousand. The Turul Association was established in 1919, following the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and it was dissolved after the end of the World War II.² Consequently, Turul was able to affect significantly the ideological development of the majority of students in Hungary for over a quarter of a century. The role of this organization was important not only for regular university students, but also for Hungarian society at large, as many members retained their membership following their graduation and continued to participate in the association’s activities. In this sense, Turul succeeded in extending the association’s ideology into everyday life.

Recent historical studies have revealed a number of important aspects, clarified significant issues in the role of this organization, and have led to the revision of the biased views prevailing in the preceding Marxist historiography. Although the available sources explored before 1989 reveal a wealth of information about Turul, these earlier studies have characterized the association as mainly a “fascist”, anti-Semitic, and irredentist organization.³ New aspects in the characterization of the Turul have emerged only from the early 1990s, when the previously closed archives became freely accessible. During this short period, the number of valuable studies has increased, however this interest has not yet extended into the
ranks of foreign researchers or translated into studies in foreign languages. The available Hungarian studies have discussed the motives, organizational form, customary order, features, and motivations of anti-Semitic actions of Turul and its sub-societies, as well as explored their wider social role and activities reaching beyond the walls of universities. Recent exploratory works have also pointed out the ideological inclusivity of fraternal organizations similar to Turul, reflected by the fact that they had members with left-wing and democratic orientation besides the right-wing radicals.4

Considerably less is known about the gender aspect and rate of the membership in Turul.5 Thus, it is worthwhile to examine the association from this point of view. Female students were a significant minority in interwar Hungarian higher education and, as a consequence, in Turul. At this time, women were allowed to enroll only in the faculties of arts and medicine (both of which they had been admitted to since 1895). As well, job opportunities in the professions were limited for women, and especially so during the years of the Great Depression.6 On the other hand, due to its official ideology, Turul was highly conservative when it came to the social role of women and rejected women’s emancipation. Nevertheless, numerous sources, including archival documents, articles, and newsreel reports, demonstrate that many women did join the Turul Association, especially in the second half of the 1930s.7

This paper attempts to examine this paradox by approaching its topic from two points of view. It will first present the development of Turul and its “masculine” ideology as it is essential for understanding the views officially represented by the Association in relation to the gender question. Then, the paper will examine the ways in which women participated in Turul’s activities. This approach aims to reveal an interesting aspect in the history of Hungarian right-wing radicalism and university movements in the interwar period.

The Turul Association’s Development and Main Features

The origins and ideology of Hungarian right-wing radical youth movements can be traced back to the distressed conditions that followed the Great War (World War I). The intellectual youth and vast number of the so-called “student-soldiers” returning from the trenches witnessed the defeat and collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the imminent loss of territories constituting a major part of the “historical” greater Hungary. In addition, owing to the dire social and economic conditions, the returning
demobilized soldiers could not continue their studies at universities, nor were they able to find employment. The Hungarian Soviet Republic between March and August 1919 further strengthened the animosity of right-leaning university students and intellectual youths towards leftist movements and Communism. In 1919-1920, these political and social circumstances crystallized the right-wing radical orientation of this generation. The massive protest against the Trianon Treaty, their view of the “Jewish question,” and a general anti-communist position thus became a cohesive force among these youths. It is necessary to mention that the post-war strengthening of right-wing radicalism was not only a Hungarian phenomenon. At the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s, radical paramilitary, right-wing organizations were formed in many European countries, including the defeated Germany as well as a victor power, Italy. This phenomenon was partly caused by the effect of the Great War and the Versailles peace treaties. Their influence was felt not only among the young intelligentsia, but in society at large. Eventually, this came to be seen as a symptom of the crisis of liberal modernity which led to the development of fascist movements and right-wing university organizations across Europe. For example, the French Jeunesses Patriotes, the Spanish Sindicato Español Universitario, the Romanian Asociația Studenților Creștini, the Italian Gruppi Universitari Fascisti. These political parties and associations all represented a radically conservative view on gender hierarchy and they all refused liberal women’s emancipation and feminism; their radical rejection of modernity was closely related to their “nationalist masculinity.”

After the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in August 1919, new student associations were established at universities throughout the country. The first among them, the Turul Association (Turul Szövetség) was brought into existence in August 1919. The rapid development of Turul was mainly due to the vacuum that arose in the social and associational life of the youths. Leftist or liberal university organizations such as the Galileo Circle, were banned after the revolutions, while old-style, traditional student societies such as the University Circles (Egyetemi Körök) were unable to represent the spirit of the emerging new era, as well as the interests and views of radical, right-wing students. The growth and expansion of Turul further accelerated after 1928, when the government of Count István Bethlen modified the anti-Semitic Act, the so-called “numerus clausus.” Already in the next year, the association counted nearly 9,000 members among university students and 48 branches throughout the country. The membership and the number of branches continued to rise
throughout the 1930s as well. In addition to regular university students (named *daru* for freshman or *levente* for higher level students) and the above-mentioned graduates (*dominus*), many external supporters of the organization, called *patronus* according to the Turul terminology, became honorary members of the Turul. These included well-known politicians, for example, the future Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös as well as university professors, and their formal participation legitimized the association’s activity to a great extent.\(^{13}\)

Turul was officially considered to be politically neutral, but had an important position among the youth movements (such as the Boy Scouts and the Hungarian *Levente* movement) because of its ideology, the so-called Christian-national spirit, and the many personal relationships it shared with the establishment. The association also had close ties to some of the infamous militant Hungarian right-wing organizations of this period, including the Hungarian National Defense Association (*Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület, MOVE*), the Association of Awakening Hungarians (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete, ÉME*), the National Association of Hungarian Women, (*Magyar Asszonyok Nemzeti Szövetsége, MANSz*), as well as the Federation of Social Associations (*Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége, TESz*).\(^{14}\)

An important feature of Turul’s membership was that first-year students enrolling at any university were advised to apply into its ranks, especially if they came from less wealthy families. When joining an association or political party, a new member identifies himself or herself with the governing ideology and social and political views of the organization. However, it is rather difficult to observe this in the case of the Turul Association. In accordance with the rules of Turul, the association often provided its members in need with financial aid or a loan, and the association leadership helped them to obtain scholarships and accommodation in student residences. It is not surprising that many students who did not sympathize with right-wing ideas became Turul members, and the minutes of meetings of local branches indeed revealed political-ideological debates and conflicts among the members.\(^{15}\)

By the end of the 1930s Turul had more than hundred branches throughout the country (112 in 1938, and 165 five years later).\(^{16}\) The local branches were divided into ten regional chapters, with headquarters in the largest cities of Hungary, among them Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged, Miskolc, in addition to Budapest. Nevertheless, there were many disputes between these regional chapters and Turul’s national headquarters in Budapest;
these disputes concerned socio-political issues and internal affairs, such as the election of national leaders.\textsuperscript{15}

Because of the many disputes and differences of opinion, it can be stated that the association had never been consistent in its program. This inconsistency was also reflected in generational issues and conflicts. In the 1920s, the mentality of Turul’s membership was quite different from that of members joining the organization in the next decade. The association’s founders and initial members were radicalized mainly by the defeat in the war and the shock caused by the Trianon Peace Treaty. For the following generation of Turul members, these determining experiences were amplified or modified by increasing economic problems associated with the Great Depression. Previous studies have demonstrated that the distress caused by the Trianon Treaty and expressed in revisionism was artificially generated and maintained in the collective national consciousness by the ruling political elite.\textsuperscript{18} Consequently, the younger members were discontented with the inefficiency and inactivity of their association, as well as with the political system and the establishment in general. They demanded radical changes, among others, in the Turul leadership and demonstrated signs of orientation toward even more extremist political movements.\textsuperscript{19} This is an important point to emphasize in our context, as most of the female members joined the association during the 1930s. However, before examining the role of women in the Turul Association, as well as the association’s view of the gender question and women’s emancipation, it is necessary to give an overview of the “masculine” features in Turul’s ideology and activities.

**Masculinity in Turul: “Racial Defense,” Nationalism, and Militarism**

The ideology of Turul consisted of many components. The most significant part was the anti-Semitism and the so-called “racial preservation” or “racial defense.” While these ideas were grounded in the popular contemporary notion that Jews were responsible for the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the Trianon Treaty, they also had roots in the pre-war period.\textsuperscript{20} In addition, an anti-royalist attitude also played an important role in shaping Turul’s ideology. In the view of Turul’s leaders, the liberalism of the Habsburg era was greatly responsible for encouraging the assimilation of Jewry and for expanding Jewish influence into Hungarian public life, at the expense of the “Christian” middle class.\textsuperscript{21}
Student activism and demonstrations can be considered to be among the most significant expressions of Turul’s anti-Semitism that materialized in similar types of incidents at nearly every Hungarian university town: Budapest, Debrecen, Pécs, and Szeged. At the beginning of the academic years, “Turulist” students would prevent Jewish students from entering the university building or classrooms. They also organized demonstrations in the street, and held assemblies where they called for further anti-Semitic restrictions, even a *numerus nullus*, a total ban of the admission of Jewish students. By the end of the 1930s, they also demanded the marking of their Jewish classmates with the yellow star. On the occasion of such incidents, Jewish students were attacked and beaten, yet Turul members took precautions when organizing the attacks: they were careful to go to a faculty different from their own: for example, Turulist law students “visited” the Faculty of Arts and they attacked the Jewish students there, who would not know and thus be unable to identify them. For their contemporaries, perhaps the most repulsive and shocking feature of these attacks was that female Jewish students were occasionally assaulted alongside their male colleagues, in acts of violence against the female body previously unprecedented and unaccepted in any social setting. These events show the disappearing ideals of chivalry and the emergence of masculine violence in the self-definition of Turul. It is important to point out that in the post-war period, anti-Semitic student demonstrations and atrocities at universities were not limited to Hungary. The contemporary press reported widely about such atrocities almost every month in other European countries, such as Poland and Romania.

However, anti-Semitism was not the sole element of Turul’s ideology of “racial preservation.” The association propagated the protection of the Hungarian “race” from every alien race, especially from Jews, Slavs, and Germans. The last is a surprising notion: while many Turul-members were admirers of Nazi Germany or joined Hungarian National Socialist parties, the official leadership of the organization was often pronouncing against the increasing influence of the German ethnic minority living in Hungary, which they regarded as a threat to the “Hungarian race.” This served as an explanation for the riots Turul members staged against ethnic German organizations, politicians, and university professors, just as they did against Jews. The protection of race — an extreme version of nationalism — can be considered as an important masculine feature, because the protection of the homeland was traditionally the fundamental responsibility of males.
The other important “masculine” element of Turul ideology was nationalism. The association’s leaders and members persistently demanded the territorial revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty. Turul revanchism (or “revisionism” in Hungarian) proposed the re-annexation of all lost territories, in some cases along with advancing a “Hungarian Imperial Idea.” This expansionist ideology emerged and developed in the later decades of the Austro-Hungarian era; its first representatives yearned for greater power and waxed nostalgic about the return to the glory of the Árpád dynasty or the empire of king Matthias Corvinus. By the 1940s, this idea became one of the cornerstones of Turul’s ideology. According to a Turul propaganda brochure published in 1940, one of the most important objectives of the association was the “awakening of a Hungarian racial consciousness”, which “prepares the realization of the Hungarian Empire together with the upholding of Hungarian military ideals and the maintenance of discipline.”

This quotation clearly reflects the most obvious masculinity feature of the Turul ideology, namely militarism. This militaristic character was manifested in several of Turul’s activities, and could be traced back to the formation of the association. After the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, the right-wing radical university students formed “university battalions” whose main purpose was to maintain the new order and “to cleanse” universities of leftist students and professors. Armed, paramilitary groups played a significant role in the strengthening of the counter-revolutionary, so-called “Christian-national” regime and their representatives constituted the initial membership of Turul and its local chapters. Later on, they provided important services for the government, especially in October 1921, when the last Habsburg emperor and Hungarian king, Charles IV attempted to regain the Hungarian throne for the second time. These battalions, with a number of Turul members within their ranks, took a prominent part in the battle of Budaörs, which ended with the defeat of the king’s troops.

Turul’s founders were thus “soldier-students,” and it is not surprising that militarism and military attitude proved to be an important factor both in the shaping of the association’s organizational structure and in the development of its ideology and activities. Turul could also be considered as a group of students associated for common purposes, a fraternity, a type of organization that had otherwise no tradition in the history of Hungarian university movements.

In addition to Turul, there existed other student associations at Hungarian universities. In the same year Turul was established, the stu-
students at the Faculty of Engineering and Technology (Műegyetem) founded their own association, Hungaria Society (Hungária Egyesület). Shortly after that, in 1920, the short-lived Christian-Socialist Centrum Association (Centrum Szövetség) was called into existence. Next in line was the Catholic and monarchist-leaning Foederatio Americana in the next year, and the last one was the expressly monarchist St. Stephen Fraternal Association (Szent István Bajtársi Szövetség), formed in 1927. These associations became the leading student organizations at Hungarian universities, and though they shared many similar tenets in their ideological foundation (the “Christian-national” idea, the militarist, anti-Semitic and irredentist character), they had their own distinct main features, and they were often hostile towards each other. Among the associations of right-wing radical Hungarian university students, Turul enjoyed the greatest influence and played the most significant role. Its dominance was due to a number of factors. First of all, Turul was not restricted to a single institution of higher education, unlike Hungária, for instance, whose members were recruited exclusively from the engineering students of Budapest. In addition, Turul recruited members on a non-denominational basis, whereas Americana was open only to Catholic students. In contrast with certain organizations’ confessed monarchism, members of Turul were not restricted when it came to their position on the potential return of the Habsburgs. Besides, popular contemporary opinion held that the liberalism of the Habsburgs was greatly responsible for the territorial losses of Hungary after the Great War, an opinion shared by many university students, in contrast to the Habsburg-loyalty of the St. Stephen Fraternal Association. The significance of Turul was further increased by its great influence on other university associations, including religious and relief organizations, because in many cases, their leadership was in the hands of Turul members. It follows from this that Turul was responsible for much of the student opinion at universities and had a great influence over the life of students at large.30

The military character of Turul was also supported by its core ideology known as the “fraternal spirit” or “fraternal life.”31 Discipline constituted a fundamental element of Turul mentality, and the association’s leaders prescribed obligatory military training to the members as early as the founding of the first local chapters of the association.32 In a country that suffered military defeat in the war, this approach could also be considered a manifestation of the popular will that accepted the aim of the restoration of “Greater,” that is prewar Hungary, as a consensus demand.
Another paramount objective of the Turul membership was the education of Hungarian youth in military morale and spirit, leading to the introduction of the “general mandatory national labour service”.

The idea of university labour camps and service was raised by Ödön Mikecz, later Minister of Justice, in April 1921. Mikecz suggested that financial aid to university students should be conditional on their participation in a university labour battalion, providing assistance in rebuilding the country, particularly in agriculture, industry, forestation, and road construction.

Turul labour camps would be established only a decade and a half later of this announcement. Their organizational structure was mainly modeled on the German Voluntary Labour Services (Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst) but traces of English, Swiss, Austrian, Swedish, and Norwegian influence could also be observed. During the second half of the 1930s, Turul member students organized labour camps in underdeveloped and backward regions of the country, providing assistance in public works. In addition, the participants of these summer camps received theoretical and practical military (so-called “national defense”) education, which consisted of “modern military knowledge,” military exercises, technical military training (for example, anti-aircraft training), disciplinary exercises, as well as religious, moral, and ideological training.

The purpose of this complex “national defense” education was the strengthening of the “racial (national) consciousness” of the Hungarian student body. The importance of this Turul initiative, labour service, cannot be overestimated and is demonstrated by the fact that the government provided significant financial support for it in the second half of 1930s, shortly after the Great Depression.

**Turul’s View of Women and the Participation of Women in the Association**

The above example clearly demonstrates that Turul was a typical “masculine” organization; this makes an examination of the association’s perspective on women and the gender question all the more important. Turul regarded the liberalism of the 19th century as anathema, for it allowed not only the assimilation of Jews but also the emancipation of women, including women’s university enrollment. This was an important feature of Hungarian higher education during the years of the World War I, when high numbers of “soldier-students” marched to the front, leaving the admission numbers of universities to be filled by female students.
After the Great War, the right-wing radical intellectual youth represented the widely shared opinion that women forcibly took professional job opportunities away from “Christian-national” men, and therefore, they protested against women’s access to higher education. This anti-emancipatory thinking had been further amplified by the economic strife during the Great Depression. At that time, the most radical Turul members strongly demanded the revision of the gender question and educational situation because — as it was explained in an article of the newspaper *Harc! Előre!* (Fight! Forward!), representing the Turul press — if not for women’s participation in the professions, “many men would find a job and many families would get bread.” Of course, the author of this article did not take into consideration that the dismissal of women would not solve the unemployment problem, but would merely result in changes in its gender ratio. While the article refers to working women in general, its recommendations also include women’s university enrollment and degrees.

In its views regarding women’s social role, the association remained staunchly conservative in later years as well, which was presumably associated with the context of the Great Depression and the broader contemporary neo-conservative approach to femininity. For example, in 1931, the Turul chapter in Debrecen issued a statement against the national beauty contests, and “proclaimed social boycott against the young women who participated in these commercial competitions.” They claimed that such beauty pageants went against the traditional ideal of the woman, whose main roles were as the faithful and modest spouse and the caring mother. According to the right-wing press of Debrecen, this action “generated the wide approval of Debrecen’s Christian-national society,” and it was followed by the active attention of the national public opinion. This is very well demonstrated by the fact that many right-wing national organizations, for example, the Association of Awakening Hungarians (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete, ÉME*), the National Association of Hungarian Women (*Magyar Asszonyok Nemzeti Szövetsége, MANSz*), and the Federation of Social Associations (*Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége, TESz*) “took notice of the movement of the youth with the highest approval,” and joined the boycott against “the improper beauty contests,” as they intoned, “in the interest of the consolidation of national morals.”

What underscored their enthusiasm was the fact that it was often young Jewish girls who won the beauty queen titles, such as in the case of the future, famous actress Zsazsa Gábor.

Two years later, in 1933, the Szeged chapter of Turul launched a national movement against the “liberal trend,” which “tried to put every-
thing in the service of eroticism” and “infected society.” According to the initiators of this movement, “fashion and the modern lifestyle endanger the social esteem of women,” therefore they plan to “launch a fight and will demand the ban of plays and films that serve eroticism.” Members of Turul then decided to contact the leaders of social associations, and made every effort to gain the approval and support of the Christian churches and their press. In this light, it is not surprising that during the years of World War II, particular actresses came to be regarded as the “enemy of the nation” in the view of Turul, for example Katalin Karády, who often played “the femme fatale” in contemporary Hungarian films. In 1943, Turul members demonstrated against her, and demanded her banishment from the Hungarian film industry.

These events reflect the association's view according to which the conservative female image was the only suitable female ideal for a “Christian-national” Hungary. At the same time it is interesting to note that the organization did not essentially reject the admission of women but, rather, expected a suitably conservative mentality from them. The association’s official position was that “the fraternal idea, the fraternal objective is equally compulsory for young women,” but “on the other hand, it is also clear that physical and psychological differences between the two genders need to be taken into consideration in the assessment of women’s fraternal life.” Admission to the organization was allowed only for those women who represented “the religious, educated Hungarian woman [who] is being proud of her home, fights assertively and represents a high moral standard,” as it was articulated at the first assembly of Turul women in 1935.

Unfortunately, there is no reliable data about the number and proportion of women in the association, because most of Turul’s official documents perished in World War II. However, available sources reveal that there was a woman elected to be a member of Turul’s leadership at the end of the 1930s. Her name was Anna Rigó, and she became one of the so-called under-chiefs or deputy chiefs, (alvezér) of the Association, hinting at the significant role of women in Turul’s life. In addition, there is also evidence of well-known politicians’ wives becoming Turul’s honorary supporter members (so-called patrona), as for example the wife of Mihály Kolosváry-Boresa, a leading right-wing politician.

Regarding the actual activities of Turul women, there is a similar dearth of sources. The very limited sources do indicate, however, that following their first general assembly in 1935, women members organized their own work camp in Kapuvár and an autumn congress in Budapest in
the next year. Unfortunately, the minutes and other documents detailing these events did not survive. Only the titles of some presentations (“The role of woman in the family,” “The social tasks of young Hungarian girls,” “The woman as a university graduate,” “The university graduate wife”) and a brief extract of a memorandum to the Hungarian cabinet are known from the daily reports of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI). The topics of these fragmental sources give an indication of female Turul members’ nationalist stance and social views: in the memorandum, they demanded the initiation and implementation of increased family protection measures, for example, tax allowances for families with many children and a tax on bachelors. These measures, if introduced, would have echoed similar policies already in effect in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The essence of this mentality is even more obviously expressed by the words of Anna Rigó, who declared at Turul’s annual general assembly in 1939 that “the women in the Turul need not fight for emancipation but rather for the goal of young Hungarian women to become better Hungarians and outstanding Hungarian mothers who stand at the top of their vocation and who are faithful helpers of their men.”

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the main objectives and activities of the Turul Association were intended to make young Hungarian intellectuals loyal to the “Christian-national” Horthy regime and form their worldview through militarist, revanchist, and racist ideas. Turul’s ideology was motivated and shaped by young people who were not trained as political ideologists. Rather, the social and political circumstances of Hungary, their military service and experiences in World War I, the loss of two-thirds of their homeland in the Trianon Treaty and their dissatisfaction with the political leadership of their country made the youths bitter and keen on creating an organization through which they could establish a new spirit for the country. Turul was a student organization initially exclusively male, but one that also accepted women from the mid-1930s onward. In addition, the participation of women in the Turul movement demonstrates that the mentality of women was affected by the contemporary right-wing radical ideology as much as that of men. The Association’s “masculinity” deeply
influenced the attitude of women as well. The intention of this study was to open new avenues for research into the little-explored notions and practices of gender, race, militarism, and youth culture on all society levels within right-wing nationalist groups in interwar Hungary.

NOTES


3 For example, see Ferenc Bárány, Az antiszemitizmus szerepe a szélső-jobboldali diákmozgalomban (1919–1921) [The role of anti-Semitism in the right-wing radical youth movement] (Budapest: Művelődésügyi Minisztérium Marxizmus-Leninizmus Oktatási Főosztálya, 1971); A haladó egyetemi ifjúság mozgalmai Magyarországon, 1918–1945 [The movements of progressive university youth in Hungary], edited by Henrik Vass (Budapest: Kossuth, 1978).


For example, the official Hungarian newsreel reported briefly on the Turul’s annual general assembly in November, 1937, and many women with Turulist cap and badge could be seen at this event. See Magyar Világhíradó [Hungarian World Newsreel], scene 718/1, Nov. 1937 http://filmhiradok.nava.hu/watch.php?id=2562, accessed on February 12, 2012. See also notes 46–52.


The Case of the Turul Association


10 On the traditional Hungarian student associations and the Galileo Circle, see János Viczián, Diákélet és diákegyesületek a budapesti egyetemeken 1914–1919 [Student life and student associations at the universities of Budapest 1914–1919], (Budapest: ELTE Levéltár, 2002).

11 The original proposal for the numerus clausus bill limited the enrollment of minorities and also restricted the number of women at Hungarian universities. This legislation was introduced by Pál Teleki’s cabinet in September 1920. The modification was mainly due to international protests against the original law in the League of Nations (especially by a British journalist, Lucien Wolf), but it was also recognized that the legislation did not contribute to alleviating the difficulties of the Christian middle class in finding employment. On the Hungarian act of numerus clausus and its modification, see Gergely Egressy, “A statistical overview of the Hungarian Numerus Clausus Law of 1920. – A historical necessity or the first step toward the Holocaust,” East European Quarterly 35, no. 4 (2001): 447–464; Róbert Kerepeszki, “A numerus clausus 1928. évi módosításának hatása Debrecenben” [The effect of the 1928 amendment of the numerus clausus in Debrecen], Múltunk, 2005, no. 4: 42–75; Andor Ladányi, “A numerus clausustól a numerus nullusig” [From the numerus clausus to the numerus nullus], Mált és Jóvó, no. 1 (2005): 56–74; Andor Ladányi, “A numerus clausus-törvény 1928. évi módosításáról” [About the modification of the numerus clausus act in 1928], Századok, no. 6 (1996): 1117–1148; Róbert Barta, “A numerus clausus törvény módosítása 1928-ban” [The modification of the numerus clausus act in 1928], in Történeti Tanulmányok I (Debrecen: KLTE, 1992), 113–125. On the contemporary international reaction to the bill, see “The Numerus Clausus and Hungary,” The Canadian Jewish Chronicle (Montreal, QC), Nov. 6, 1925.

12 Zoltán Magyary, Emlékíratt az egyetemi ifjúság szociális gondozásának megsemmezése tárgyában [Memorandum on the organization of the social care of university students] (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1929), 133; Róbert Kerepeszki, “A numerus clausus és a Turul Szövetség” [The numerus clausus and the Turul Association], in Jogosztás – 90 éve. Tanulmányok a
On the obligations and names of the Turul-membership, see A Turul Szövetség Alapszabályzata [Statutes of the Turul Association] (Budapest: Turul, 1927), 5–20. Gömbös as prime minister of Hungary explicitly and proudly proclaimed that he was the “protagonist of the same world view” as Turul members. “Gömbös Gyula miniszterelnök beszéde a Turul Szövetség dísztáborán,” Budapest, 1934. március 11. [Speech of Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös on the festive general assembly of the Turul Association], in Gömbös Gyula. Válogatott politikai beszédek és írások [Gyula Gömbös. Selected political speeches and writings], edited by József Vonyó (Budapest: Osiris, 2004), 596–600. While a significant number of Turul members abandoned Gömbös because of the failure of his policy in the mid-1930s, a special cult was formed around him after his death in 1936. See Magyar Világhíradó [Hungarian World Newsreel], scene 682/1, March 1937, Online: http://filmhiradok.nava.hu/watch.php?id=2232, accessed on February 12, 2012.

Miklós Kozma, Az összeomlás 1918–1919 (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1933), 69. The Association of Awakening Hungarians was the most notorious right-wing radical organization during the first decade of the Horthy era. According to some sources, university students played an important role in the formation of this association. On the interwar Hungarian social associations, see Róbert Kerepeszki, “A politikai és társadalmi élet határán. A Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége a Horthy-korszakban” [Between political and social life. The Federation of Social Associations in the Horthy era] in “…nem leleplezni, hanem megismerni és megérteni.” Tanulmányok a 60 éves Romsics Ignác tiszteletére [“…not to slander but to learn and understand.” Studies in honour of 60-year-old Ignác Romsics], edited by Sándor Gebei, Iván Bertényi, Jr., and János Rainer M. (Eger: Líceum, 2011), 373–388.


“A Turul Szövetség tiszteletileinek és tagegyesületeinek jegyzékei, 1936–1943” [Lists of officials and chapters of the Turul Association, 1936–1943], Documents of Turul Association, Record Group P 1364, Box 1, Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary], hereafter MOL.

“A Turul Szövetség XVII. Országos Követtáborának jegyzőkönyve” [Minutes of the Turul Association’s 17th National Assembly], Miskolc, November 5–8, 1936, Documents of Turul Association, Record Group P 1364, Box 1, MOL.

The Case of the Turul Association


19 This is well demonstrated by many careers. The leading members of the first Turul-generation were the followers of Gyula Gömbös: György Bánsághy (former medical student, Turul-leader between 1920 and 1929) became an MP of Gömbös’s governing party (Nemzeti Egyeség Pártja – Party of National Unity) and Béla Bélidi (former student of economics who founded chapters of Turul in 1921) was appointed as the propaganda chief of the party. In contrast, many members of the second Turul-generation of the next decade were drawn to extreme radical movements. For example, János Salló (Turul’s press secretary and general editor of *Bajtárs* in the 1930s) and Imre Kémeri Nagy (Transylvanian refugee, leader of the chapter of law students) became active members of Hungarian national socialist movements. Salló founded a right-wing radical party, the National Front (Nemzeti Front) while Kémeri Nagy became the follower of Ferenc Szálasi, leader of the Arrow Cross. Some others (Sándor Zöld, Géza Losonczy, Szilárd Újhelyi) joined the illegal Communist Party. About these careers, see Kerepeszki, “A Turul Szövetség” [The Turul Association]; and Rudolf Paksa, “Szélsőjobboldali mozgalmak az 1930-as években” [Right-wing radical movements in the 1930s], in *A magyar jobboldali hagyomány*, 297.

20 János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* [The Jewish question in Hungary] (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 102–109. The most significant movement of the pre-war period that mobilized university students around anti-Semitism was the so-called “Cross movement.” In May 1900, unknown perpetrators broke the cross off of the Hungarian coat of arms in the building of University of Budapest: this event had become the symbol of the movement. Jews were accused of commissioning the act, leading to an open anti-Semitic atmosphere at the university, and shaping many Christian students’ worldview. For reference, see Miklós Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus és a jobboldali radikalizmus története 1867–1918* [The history of neo-conservatism and right-wing radicalism 1867–1918] (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2003), 184–213, 265–270; István Kornai, “Magyar ifjúsági mozgalmak 1849–1919” [Hungarian youth movements 1849–1919], in *Werbőczy* Évkönyv 1928 [“Werbőczy” Almanach 1928], edited by Béla Lendvay (Budapest: Turul, 1928), 7–11.


22 András Szécsényi, “Hogy ki a magyar, azt mindig csak maguk a magyarok dönthetik el – A Turul Szövetség a közgazdasági egyetemen 1941-ben” [Who is Hungarian will always be decided by Hungarians – The Turul Association at the University of Economics in 1941], *Kommentár*, no. 3 (2009): 69–78; Bernard Klein, “Anti-Jewish Demonstrations in Hungarian Universities, 1932–


24 For example, one of the Turul newspapers wrote the following warning: “our race (is) threatened by two dangers: the Jews and the Germans.” Report of the Police Office of Pécs about the regional German ethnic movements and the extreme-right parties, Pécs, September 5, 1942, Record Group K 149, no. 1942–7–6006, MOL.


26 Erdélyi, *A mi utunk* [Our path], 9–12.


28 Turul’s organizational structure was mainly based on the German model, especially on the traditional *Burschenschaften*. Hans-Georg Balder, *Geschichte der Deutschen Burschenschaft* (Hilden: WJK-Verlag, 2006).


30 Fraternal associations of university students were not exclusive to Hungary. After the Great War, this type of social organizations could be found in many countries. For the Czechoslovak example, see John Haag, “Knights of the

31 In the 1930s, the leadership of Turul published ideological “guidelines” explaining the “fraternal idea” to younger members. For example, see Bevezetés a bajtársi életbe [Introduction to fraternal life] (Debrecen: Méhely Bajtársi Egyesület, 1934); A Turul világnézet irányelvei és bajtársi útmutató [Guidelines of the Turul worldview and fraternal instructions] (Budapest: Turul, 1937).

32 Bevezetés a bajtársi életbe, 4-9.

33 “Mit kíván a Turul ifjúság március 15-én?” [What does the Turul youth want on March 15th?] Bajtárs, 2 March 1938. It is important to mention that Turul’s labour service had no connection to the notoriously inhuman compulsory labour service, established by the Hungarian government during World War II, for unarmed Jewish men.

34 Ödön Mikecz, “Az egyetemi munkaszázadok” [The university labour batallions], Iják Szava (Budapest), Jun. 4, 1921.


37 Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 25 February 1938, Record Group K 27, MOL.

38 Péter Bihari, Lövészárkok a hátrországban. Középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországán [Trenches in the hinterland. Middle-class, Jewish question, anti-Semitism in Hungary during World War I], (Budapest: Napvilág, 2008), 150–164.

39 The dire financial straits of Hungarian young intellectuals were demonstrated in many contemporary sources. For example, Carlile Aylmer Macartney, who was in charge of the Hungarian section of the British Foreign Office Research Department in the second half of the 1930s, wrote the following about the influence of the Great Depression on the Hungarian intellectual youth: “Most
important of all, perhaps, spiritually, although numerically far weaker than the urban or rural proletariat, is the growing host of impoverished intellectuals. Up to a comparatively recent period, the greater part of the university-trained youth was accommodated without great difficulty in the Government service, while the free professions, not yet overcrowded, absorbed the remainder. Today the situation is entirely different. Year after year the Universities and High Schools turn out thousands of young men and women for whom there is literally no place in the economic system. Although the Government makes every effort to find places for as many as it can, yet the economic state of the country is such as absolutely to forbid the old elastic system which could always find one job more for a youth of good connections and reliable opinions. The professions are overcrowded and the rewards which they offer are miserable in the extreme.” Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *Hungary* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1934), 362–363.


42 Zsazsa Gábor (born Sári Gábor) was born in Budapest in February, 1917. She began her stage carrier at the age of 15, and was elected Miss Hungary in 1936. Because of her Jewish origins she immigrated to the United States in 1941, and was featured in more than forty Hollywood films. She is perhaps best known for her colourful private life, including her nine marriages, among them to the hotel magnate Conrad Hilton. In 1991 she published her memoirs, *One Lifetime is Not Enough* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1991).


44 Daily News of the Hungarian News Agency, 1 May 1943, Record Group K 428, series T, MOL. See also the article of David S. Frey, “Mata Hari or the Body of the Nation? Interpreations of Katalin Karády” in this volume.

45 *Bevezetés a bajtársi életbe*, 28–32.


47 There is, however, some data about the local chapters of Turul. For example, the organization of the medical students in Debrecen (Csaba Bajtársi Egyesület) had 175 members in 1936, 23 of whom were women. We know that in the same year, 43 women were enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine so more than half of the female students joined Turul. List of Csaba Bajtársi Egyesület, Debrecen, 19 May 1936, Record Group VIII.1/b, Box 53, No. 1271–1935/36, Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár (Archives of Hajdú-Bihar County).

48 *Új Vétes*, Apr. 1933, 9. Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa was the press secretary of Béla Imrédy’s cabinet in 1938, president of the Press Chamber and an MP
of the governing party (Magyar Élet Pártja – Party of Hungarian Life) in the next year. He kept his functions after the German occupation of Hungary in 1944. He was executed as a war criminal in 1946. Gyurgyák, *A zsidőkérdés*, 401–411.

49 Béla Giczy, “Nyilatkozat az első Turul Női Nemzeti Munkaszolgálatról” [Communiqués about the first Turul female national labour service], *Új Ézerév*, August-September, 1936, 2.

50 Record Group K 612, 23 November 1936, MOL.

51 Record Group K 612, 21 January 1939, MOL.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and articles


*Bevezetés a bajtársi életbe* [Introduction to fraternal life]. Debrecen: Méhelő Bajtársi Egyesület, 1934.


Documents of Magyar Távirati Iroda [Hungarian News Agency], Record Group K 428, series A, Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary].

Documents of Ministry for Home Affairs, Reserved Documents, Record Group K 149, Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary].

Documents of Turul Association, Record Group P 1364, Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary].

Documents of University of Debrecen, Record Group VIII.1/b, Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár [Archives of Hajdú-Bihar County].


———. “A budai csata emlékezete és a királykérdés a két világháború közötti egyetemi ifjúsági mozgalmak politikai gondolkodásában” [The memory of the Battle of Budaörs and the question of monarchy in the


The Case of the Turul Association


*Magyar Világhíradó* [Hungarian World Newsreel]. http://filmhiradok.nava.hu


————. “Hogy ki a magyar, azt mindig csak maguk a magyarok dönthetik el – A Turul Szövetség a közgazdasági egyetemen 1941-ben” [Who is Hungarian will always be decided by Hungarians – The Turul Association at the University of Economics in 1941]. Kommentár, no. 3 (2009): 69–78.


The Case of the Turul Association


**Contemporary Newspapers**

The Canadian Jewish Chronicle
Bajtárs
Debreceni Újság Hajdúföld
Debreczen
Gyula Regős
Harc Előre
Ifjak Szava
Nemzeti Újság
New York Times
Pester Lloyd
Új Élet
Új Ezerév
Új Vetés.