

GÖRGEY, LEE, AND PERCEPTIONS

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It was one of those hot July days in Budapest and I had just convinced my Hungarian friend, Judit Ruzicska, to accompany me to the National Cemetery to visit the mausoleum of the Hungarian statesman Lajos Kossuth. I had recently finished the rough draft of my dissertation on the confederation plans of both Kossuth and the former minister of nationalities in the Károlyi government, Oszkár Jászi. I had previously seen Jászi's grave on a visit to Oberlin, Ohio, in 1985, now all that remained for me was to lay some flowers on Kossuth's grave.

To Hungarian friends my fascination with visiting the graves of historic people seemed an aberration. Almost none of them had ever ventured to the National Cemetery. Some who lived in Budapest did not even know its location. Granted, the remains of the Russian soldiers who helped to put down the uprising in 1956 were a vivid reminder of a painful past; however, their failure to know the location of their national cemetery just seemed to be another of the cultural differences that existed between us. One friend, a Hungarian language instructor at the summer program in Debrecen, informed me she had lied to her American students about having visited the cemetery because she felt embarrassed about the responses she received when telling them the truth. Still, she had no intention of going there. Hungarians were known to visit the unmarked graves of Imre Nagy and the dead of 1956, but this clearly seemed to be a people coming to grips with their past. We too have a wall in Washington, a reminder of generation's sacrifice in southeast Asia, for a similar purpose. But Americans are continuously taking trips to cemeteries to honor their heroes, and, in some cases, their villains. One only has to venture to Gettysburg or Arlington during the summer to grasp this American phenomenon of visiting and paying homage to their dead. After all, one can learn a great deal about cultures in the way they honor their dead.

Kossuth's tomb was impressive; however, with the exception of Judit, there were no other living Hungarians present beyond the guards at the entrance.

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We did, however, meet a German tourist who asked us for directions to Kossuth's grave. I could not help feeling the irony that it was we foreigners who were paying homage to Hungary's national heroes and not the indigenous people. Afterward, I could not resist the temptation of visiting other famous dead Hungarians. On my trip to another mausoleum I tripped, literally, over an inconspicuous grave. A further examination revealed the name Artúr Görgey (1818-1916). It seemed so plain! So ordinary! Yes, a great deal can be learned by the way people honor their dead. In fact, Hungarian historiography can be vividly explained by a simple examination of the way the Hungarians have posthumously honored Kossuth and Görgey. It did not escape my attention that under the socialist regime Kossuth had been resurrected. His presence is visible in every Hungarian city I visited. Statues, streets, schools, and stores all reflect his presence. Not so with Görgey. In actuality, not so much as a statue was present in Budapest to honor Hungary's most famous soldier since Ferenc Rákóczi II, who had led the struggle for Hungarian independence from 1703 to 1711. I could not help feeling that Miklós Horthy, who had done much to enhance Görgey's image,¹ was turning over in his grave at this injustice to a fellow soldier.

Unfortunately, the military talents of Görgey have always been tarnished by accusations that he betrayed Hungary during its War of Independence in 1849. Immediately following the struggle Görgey was branded a traitor by the Hungarian president, Kossuth, who referred to him as "Hungary's Judas." Kossuth alleged that Görgey had undermined the state by surrendering to the Russians at Világos, and delivered his officers and soldiers to Austrian vengeance, while he secured amnesty and payment for himself. Unfortunately for Görgey, these perceptions have continued to color Hungarian historiography. Critics question his apparent lack of chivalry in a profession that is steeped in romanticism and demands a code of justice and honor. Military history is often written by what Arden Bucholz calls "participant-observers-career soldiers or civilians who fought in wars."² Consequently, a perception exists among certain military circles that a captain must go down with his ship and generals should share the fate of their men and officers. Although there have been attempts, most notably under the regency of Horthy, to resurrect Görgey's image, he is still the victim of these misconceptions. The perception of Görgey's surrender and escape from the gallows has overshadowed his brilliant military performance during the war.

Regrettably for Görgey, he did not possess the personality of a Robert E. Lee, the Confederate general who even in defeat aroused the respect and admiration of both friend and foe. Lee's surrender at Appomattox has never been overshadowed by accusations of treachery. On the contrary, admirers,

such as Winston Churchill, write that "Lee was one of the greatest captains known to the annals of war." Such statements have not been forthcoming in Görgey's defense. Although Friedrich Engels considered Görgey, along with the Pole József Bem, to be the most talented commanders of that age, few today are familiar with Görgey's exploits during the Hungarian War of Independence. According to István Deák, he was "cold, sarcastic, overly modest, puritanical, and contemptuous."³ Priscilla Robertson states that Görgey

did not care a fig for Hungary in his heart, or for any other ideal... He sneered, openly or privately, at Kossuth and the government of Hungary, at the common people, at the militia, at his own soldiers, and even at himself.⁴

These are not the personal traits which inspire admiration and devotion among anyone else but his soldiers. The South could forgive Lee for his blunder at Gettysburg, but Görgey could never escape the charge that he had sold his honor and country for a price.

Regardless of Görgey's performance in battle and the common sense he showed in surrender, accolades are never easily given to commanders who lose a war - in particular, to an individual such as Görgey, whose contempt for politicians and military superiors, such as János Móga and the Pole Henryk Dembinski, led him to obstruct, disobey, and interfere with their decisions. Machiavelli wrote "If a general wins a battle it cancels all other errors and miscarriage."⁵ The converse of this statement implies that if a general loses a war, all brilliance, daring, and audacity must be cancelled out by his failure. Charles Fair states

there have been few men so strategically placed and so overpowering in their authority that they were able,... single-handedly, to bring on a general disaster... [and] in defeat, the first concern of those officially responsible is always to shift the blame onto others and to prove their own conduct to have been above reproach, if not wasted in its brilliance.⁶

As far as Görgey's reputation is concerned, this is an occasion when a unique military leader falls in defeat, losing in the process both the war and his reputation.

Other factors besides generalship can lead to military failure. Command, according to Martin Blumenson,

is an art to be mastered, a craft that requires specialized knowledge, a well-developed intuition, high intelligence, and the ability to reason. The process of motivating human

beings and controlling impersonal forces during a clash of arms is extremely complicated and difficult, and successful practitioners of the art of command have been a special breed of men.⁷

As a result, it might be fitting to place Görgey in a category with Hannibal, Charles XII, Napoleon, Erwin Rommel, and Lee, all of whom fell in defeat. He should, however, at least rank in Hungarian military historiography with Rákóczi. Victory requires that one opponent overmatch another in the sum of his generalship plus all other capabilities for waging war. Hence, if historians want to judge Görgey fairly, they must consider the resources at his command along with his performance. In Görgey's case, he opposed superior forces but managed to hold out and inflict defeat with his ill-supplied and poorly supported army.

But all these factors cease to matter as long as Hungarians continue to debate and discredit Görgey's role in the revolution. Since Hungarians refuse to recognize his military prowess, there is little chance that foreign historians will ever give him the recognition he deserves. In the modern western tradition it becomes necessary for nation-states to honor their own heroes before presenting them to the world for approval. Görgey has not passed the first and most important hurdle of national appreciation. Karl Marx would acknowledge that this road to the international recognition must first go the national route.

Lee represents, probably more than anyone else, the precise paradigm of how this process works. There are always two major considerations in describing his military talents: first, he fought against the North, and consequently, after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, for the continuation of slavery; and second, Lee is the only American general to have ever lost a war. Naturally, had the South won, neither of these factors would have mattered. Lee, however, surrendered to the Union general Ulysses S. Grant in 1865. After the war Lee became the symbol of the Lost Cause for the defeated South. They revered him to the point of worship. His birthday, 19 January, is still celebrated as a holiday in some former Confederate states. Washington College, where Lee served as president from the end of the war until his death in 1870, was later renamed Washington and Lee University. Plenty of statues in cities and on battlefields honor his place in American history. His high personal character, his humility, his selflessness, and his devotion to what he considered his duty placed Lee in a unique position to be not only loved by southerners, but also respected and admired by his adversaries. Unlike Görgey, Lee passed the important first hurdle necessary for recognition. Internationally, Churchill, Sir Frederic Maurice, Cyril Falls, and even Bernard Law

Montgomery, have all written respectfully of Lee's military career. His military career may have fallen short of their abstract yardstick of perfection, but his character overwhelmingly satisfied their romantic military code.

Görgey's accomplishments are as impressive as Lee's when one considers the lack of organization, lack of trust, and constant interference of Kossuth's government. His Vác Proclamation of 5 January 1849, which affirmed the independence of the Army of the Upper Danube and its loyalty to the Constitution of 1848, saved both the army from disintegration and the state from collapse. Görgey's troops and officers were passionately loyal to their commander, and at times, were the actual force preventing any government threat to remove him. Görgey's army emerged from northern Hungary to take the counteroffensive, with General György Klapka's army corps, against the Austrian Field Marshall Alfred Windisch-Graetz. Under Görgey's leadership the Hungarians liberated Komárom, Buda-Pest, and eventually, almost all of Hungary. Unfortunately, Görgey was able only to defeat, not to destroy, the Austrian army which opposed him, but his successes were responsible for the removal of Windisch-Graetz as head of the Austrian forces. This campaign was the high point of Hungary's struggle for independence and gave Kossuth the military victories needed to announce the dethronement of the Habsburg dynasty on 14 April 1849. Kossuth, who distrusted Görgey and even ordered his court-martial on 24 March 1849, would not appoint Görgey commander-in-chief of the Hungarian forces until the situation was lost. Görgey, however, was appointed minister of war in May 1849. Also, Kossuth's choice of József Bem, a Pole, over Görgey as commander of all Hungary's troops only served to create further dissension among the army and within the state.

Finally, the addition of Austrian troops from the successfully concluded Italian campaign, the intervention of Tsar Nicholas I's Russian troops under Field Marshall Ivan Paskevich, the appointment of General Ludwig Haynau as the Austrian commander-in-chief in Hungary, and Görgey's further involvement in political issues and intrigues would all play roles in Hungary's defeat; however, judging by the attitudes of the great powers, in particular Great Britain and Russia, it is highly doubtful that Hungary's struggle for independence would have ever ended in victory. For Görgey, the most Hungary could hope for was to fight long enough to convince the opposition to accept a negotiated settlement in which Hungary would retain its autonomy and the April laws of 1848. After almost two months of continual retreat against superior forces, Görgey, having forced the resignation of Kossuth on 11 August, had himself appointed dictator. When he realized the situation was hopeless, Görgey proceeded to negotiate the surrender of his army to the Russians at Világos two days later. Eventually, as Görgey had realized, the

Hungarians would have to settle for a compromise, but that would not be negotiated until 1867.

As for Görgey, he would be forever branded by Kossuth for betraying Hungary. In an open letter dated 12 September 1849, Kossuth put responsibility for Hungary's defeat squarely on Görgey's shoulders. While in exile, Kossuth studied military strategy and tactics so he could personally lead Hungary's forces during its second war of independence and thereby prevent the "intrigues" of another Görgey. Kossuth believed this second struggle would involve the West against Russia, and he was actively involved in émigré politics promoting this new confrontation. Görgey, however, would live the remaining sixty-seven years of his life in the Habsburg empire in virtual obscurity. With the exception of the publication of his memoirs, his reputation and legacy remained a continual subject for debate.

The Vác Proclamation

During the first half of the nineteenth century successful struggles for independence were still very much the exception rather than the rule. In actuality, with the exception of the American Revolution, one would be hard pressed to find a war of independence that in the end brought liberation for the rebel forces. The Hungarian struggle for independence, like those of the Poles before and after them, is another struggle which ended in defeat; however, independence was not the original goal of the participants, and, consequently, even after it was declared the expressed objective by the government on 14 April 1849, there were those, like Görgey, who supported the original objective of loyalty to the king and the April Laws of 1848.

Görgey's dilemma was not unlike that of George Washington, Lee, and Union general George Thomas, who found themselves in similar positions. All of them at one time had served and swore loyalty to either their king or government. George Thomas was as much a Virginian as Lee; however, unlike Lee, Thomas remained loyal to the Union he served. Neither soldier could be a traitor to his personal conscience. Likewise, Görgey chose to remain loyal to his king. Görgey entered the struggle because "the country was in danger."⁸ Unlike Kossuth, Görgey recognized tangible objectives and sought to accomplish them. The Vác Proclamation is an expression of his conscience. The Royal Army of the Upper Danube would remain loyal to the 1848 constitution that was sanctioned by the king, and to the principle of constitutional monarchy.⁹ Consequently, independence was an anathema to Görgey and the vast majority of those officers who followed him.

Görgey's actions during this period are similar to those of Washington and Lee. Görgey realized the importance of keeping his army intact as a fighting force. According to Clausewitz, the first principal object in carrying on a war is "to conquer and destroy the enemy's armed forces." The Vác Proclamation kept the army alive and intact as an instrument that could be used to force a compromise with Austria based on the 1848 constitution. For Görgey, the army was loyal to King Ferdinand and fought the octroyed constitution.¹⁰

Like the American Continental Army, it was important for the Hungarian army to exist in order to achieve an equitable solution. Görgey approached Kossuth and the government more than once on the prospect of compromise with Austria.¹¹ A battle won was the best declaration of independence. The bayonet was necessary to gain Hungary's constitutional rights.¹² Like Washington and Lee, however, Görgey knew that the salvation of his country was impossible without foreign assistance. Washington received such help, and the American colonies' struggle for independence was realized in 1781. Such assistance never materialized for Lee or Görgey. Consequently, both of their struggles ended in defeat, a defeat Görgey knew as inevitable.

"In war," writes Clausewitz, "it is only by means of a directing spirit that we can expect the full power latent in the troops to be developed." Washington's success provides such a paradigm to judge Görgey's actions. Both had the love, loyalty, and respect of their troops. Their armies put their faith in their commanders, who kept them together against tremendous odds and hardships. The Continental Army endured at Valley Forge because of their faith in their commander. Washington never allowed his army to be trapped or destroyed as a fighting force. He realized that as long as it existed, the goals of the revolution could be achieved. Washington only had to hold out until the French and Spanish became involved on the American side. The British, however, had to destroy Washington's army as an effective fighting force or face defeat. Likewise, Lincoln and Görgey understood this important military axiom. It took Lincoln until 1864 to find a general who understood that the destruction of Lee's army was the principal Union objective. He found that person in Grant.¹³ When Grant forced Lee to surrender, the war ended.

Lincoln, however, had a distinct advantage not afforded to Görgey. One reason the Union was saved was that the South was even more unprepared (having to raise an army from scratch) than the North. Although the Austrians, during the early stages of the revolution, were more concerned with events in Italy and Bohemia, they still possessed an organized, trained, and equipped fighting force to use against Hungary when the opportunity presented itself. Hungary, like the American colonies, had little time to organize and equip a fighting force that could effectively resist and, if possible, defeat

the Austrians. Görgey's Vác Proclamation, which saved the Hungarian army from dissolution, gave purpose to his army and its goals. The Army of the Upper Danube would not be the tool of any political party. Officers and soldiers who had previously served in the Habsburg army and sworn an oath to the king did not betray that loyalty. The Hungarian army would fight and continue to exist until Austria realized the futility of the struggle and agreed to a compromise that would guarantee the constitution and the honor of the army. It was Görgey's responsibility to safeguard the army as a force, to use it wisely and obey only the orders of the "responsible Royal Hungarian Minister of War." The Army of the Upper Danube was fighting for its country and its king, "the constitution of Hungary was worth a sanguinary contest."¹⁴ Görgey was thereby following Washington's example.

The Vác Proclamation also rescued the army from the naive and military unsound orders of the Hungarian government. For example, as the government abandoned Pest-Buda for Debrecen in early 1849, Görgey was ordered to fight a decisive battle west of Buda against the Austrians. The occupation of Buda would not only disorganize the Hungarian government, but could serve as a visible sign to the people that its cause had perhaps failed. Görgey, who realized that such a battle would almost certainly end in a resounding defeat, would not risk the destruction of his army in such a frivolous manner. Such a defeat would be tantamount to the defeat of the country. Görgey, growing increasingly irritated with Kossuth and the Committee of Defense, issued the proclamation to protect the army from politicians who failed to understand its importance. According to Ian Roberts,

Kossuth... was first and foremost a politician who found himself having to deal with military affairs by virtue of the office he held. Görgey was a professional soldier of a distinctly practical nature. Soldiers needed discipline, boots, bullets and pay, rather than high-flown oratory about the defence of freedom and their native land.¹⁵

The psychological significance of Pest-Buda was not lost on Görgey; however, he knew the rebellion would not end with its capture.¹⁶ Although the Austrian commander, Windisch-Graetz, might have favored this more Jominian tactic of territorial occupation, it is essential to point out that Moscow fell to Napoleon, but his invasion of Russia ended in his defeat. Hannibal invaded Italy and lost. Charles XII of Sweden was defeated in Russia. The turning point of the American Civil War was at Gettysburg, the climatic defeat of Lee's last invasion of the North. Görgey knew that the Austrians could not win unless the independent Hungarian army was destroyed; and, just as important, this destruction would have to be registered in Hungary.

Görgey continued to move the Austrians farther away from their bases of supply and into unfamiliar and hostile territory. They would now fight on land of Görgey's choosing and on his terms. In late January 1849, Windisch-Graetz, believing the end of the struggle was at hand, requested the surrender of Görgey's army; he was answered with a copy of the Vác Proclamation.¹⁷ The proclamation was Görgey's gauntlet. The rebellion would not end until the Army of the Upper Danube, like Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, either ceased to exist or was victorious in the achievement of its goals. For Görgey it was a struggle for survival of the nation and self-defense, not independence. It was these objectives, the political goals of the struggle, that served as the greatest difference between the army and the politicians. But like the armies of Xerxes, Napoleon, Hannibal, Charles **XII**, Lee, and countless other invasion forces, Windisch-Graetz and his invading army were defeated and forced to withdraw from Hungary at a time when victory seemed close at hand. Afterward, on 12 April 1849, Windisch-Graetz was dismissed by the young emperor Franz Joseph.

Görgey's Winter Offensive **and** Siege of Buda

In battle tactical success will often hinge on which commander blunders the least. Ultimately victory goes to the army making the least mistakes. Moving great masses of men and material against a large force, which is better equipped and equally committed to your destruction, will undoubtedly leave a great deal to chance. "War," according to Clausewitz, "is the province of chance." This axiom is quite evident in Görgey's winter offensive against the Austrians following the Vác Proclamation. He was fortunate to have a staff of talented corps commanders in whose hands he entrusted the tactical aspects of his battle plans. His corps commanders, in particular, János Damjanich, György Klapka, Richárd Guyon, and Lajos Aulich were all soldiers of merit. Görgey possessed sound leadership principles by having talented subordinates, leaving them alone, and interfering only when it was absolutely necessary.¹⁸ He showed great leadership under fire. ("He who, himself in danger, inspires others with courage, most strengthens his own.")¹⁹ He had the ability to counter decisions of the enemy, and like U.S. Grant, to think and react coolly under the most difficult circumstances.

The intricacies of the winter campaign are beyond the scope of this work; however, to summarize, on 5 February at Branyiszókó against the Austrians under General Count Franz Schlick, Görgey's forces, led by Guyon, broke through a heavily defended mountain pass to endanger the Austrian rear and force Schlick's retreat. This action followed a successful operation in the

north-eastern Zips region which bought the army and government the necessary time to rest and reorganize their efforts. Görgey's operations in northern Hungary occupied the three Austrian army corps led by Generals Christian Götze, Baron Franz Csorich, and Baron Balthasar Simunich until Görgey's position became untenable. Taking full advantage of the situation, Görgey fought his way through the Carpathian mountains to Eperjes and Kassa. He then appeared on Schlick's rear, forcing a retreat. Afterward, he marched down the Hernád to the Tisza to join the main body of the Hungarian army with Klapka to set the stage for the counter offensive and the relief of the fortresses at Komárom and Buda. The success of this campaign, conducted under harsh winter conditions, solidified Görgey's reputation as a military leader.

It is the decision to liberate Buda, however, that draws the most attention among Görgey's critics. It is the one decision during this campaign with which they can find fault. The failure to pursue the Austrian forces after the victorious winter campaign is considered a serious strategic blunder. Klapka, a strong supporter of Kossuth, in his memoirs brings attention to this action as possible proof that Görgey was already planning at this time to assume the dictatorship of Hungary, another false claim which helped to further soil Görgey's reputation. It must be stressed that the decision to liberate Buda came after Kossuth's declaration of Hungarian independence on 14 April 1849. Previously, Kossuth had approached Austria about a negotiated peace based on the April Laws. First, the Hungarians made overtures through William Stiles, the diplomatic representative of the United States. Later, Ferenc Deák and Lajos Batthyány approached Windisch-Graetz on 3 January 1849. However, these overtures were rejected by the Austrians.²⁰ Görgey had also approached Kossuth about the possibility of compromise with Austria. He believed it was possible to negotiate an acceptable settlement based on the 1848 constitution. But Görgey maintained that Hungarian freedom would be earned by silence and force of arms. It would be achieved lawfully.²¹ Kossuth's declaration of independence, however, made without consulting the military leadership in the field, was a mistake. "War admittedly has its own grammar, but not its own logic."

Afterward, Görgey realized that the war "could end only with the complete defeat of the one or the other forces."²² So if Görgey understood the military reality, why violate this axiom? Should he have pressed the offensive against the Austrians until the issue was solved? Although he points out that ammunition was in short supply, the focus on Buda was a political action. He believed that a negotiated settlement with Austria would be easier to achieve with the capture of the ancient capital.²³ But peace might have been achieved

faster and on more equitable terms with Vienna in Hungarian hands. Certainly the capture of the imperial city would have given greater recognition and legitimacy to Hungary's cause and served as an important pawn in the bargaining process, provided the Hungarians could hold and defend it during the peace negotiations. But it is important to point out that both Vienna and Moscow fell to France during the Napoleonic wars, and Austria and Russia still survived to see victory in 1814. Even with Vienna's capture Austria would not have negotiated a settlement with Kossuth and the Hungarians, and, more significantly, Nicholas had already made the decision to send Russian troops to aid Austria. Also, a previous Hungarian attempt to capture Vienna had ended in failure.

One important consequence of Kossuth's declaration was that Görgey and his actions would become more political. Görgey hoped that Austria would realize it could appease the Hungarian army without defeating it by dispensing with the octroyed constitution and guaranteeing the April Laws.²⁴ In his letter of 30 June 1849, Görgey wrote to Kossuth that he was fighting for the nation, not the government. He was even prepared to lay down his arms to secure the best possible terms for Hungary.²⁵

Previously, Klapka and Görgey agreed that the salvation of Hungary was impossible without foreign assistance. Kossuth's declaration prevented either France or Britain from aiding Hungary's cause. It strengthened the resolve of the conservative forces in Britain, which supported tradition and the status quo. More important, after the declaration, Britain, which considered Austria's existence vital to its imperial interest, had already given its consent to Russia to put an end to things in Hungary. In actuality, although Britain and France were concerned with Russia's increased presence in the Danubian Principalities, neither state was ever seriously willing to assist the Hungarian cause. Görgey knew it was important to repudiate the law of 14 April in order to stop or forestall the Russian invasion. Hungary could not defeat Austria and Russia. The Russian invasion forces consisted of 190,000 men and 600 guns. Their commander, Prince Ivan Paskevich, planned his invasion with the goal that his forces should have between one and a half to two times as many troops as the Hungarians in order to guarantee victory.²⁶ Knowing the odds were against him, Görgey continued with the struggle in the hope of winning acceptance of the 1848 constitution. Kossuth's declaration inhibited negotiation and turned the more conservative elements in Hungary against the struggle and toward Vienna for accommodation. The Peace Party, which had approached Görgey for support, reflects this reality.

It is essential to understand Görgey's opinion of the events in Hungary in order to clearly appreciate his military decisions after 14 April. Had he

originally pursued the Austrians instead of concentrating on Buda, it is still doubtful whether he could have taken the offensive successfully across the Leithia. As Clausewitz put it, "In strategy everything is very simple, but not on that account very easy." The great powers would never have allowed Austria to be destroyed, and Hungary did not possess the strength to cause this destruction. Like Lee, Görgey never possessed the illusion that he could totally destroy his opponent's forces. Rather, he wanted to make the cost of destroying his army far beyond the price the Austrians were willing to pay. In this regard he was more like Washington. Unfortunately for Görgey, after his victories Windisch-Graetz was replaced with more resolute commanders, including Baron Haynau; Italy had been suppressed; and Russia was entering the contest. In his last speech as minister of war, Görgey still hoped to defeat Austria before the Russians became heavily involved in the contest.²⁷ His strategic plans reflected this objective; however, the situation had changed because of the overwhelming opposition against him. Unlike for Washington's enemies, distance was not a problem for Görgey's opposition.

Görgey was himself a realist who understood the situation in a cynical manner void of illusion. He believed Hungary could not defeat Austria and achieve independence without outside interference. Regardless of what action Görgey pursued, he needed to destroy the Austrian army in the hope of negotiating the best possible settlement with the government. He had to keep his force alive as a negotiating piece. As the Austrian army withdrew from Hungary, they drew closer to their supply lines. Fresh troops and ammunition would become more easily accessible. Paskevich was in the process of sending 13,000 Russian troops and 48 guns under General Fyodor Panyutin by rail to Pozsony to support the Austrians.²⁸ So, for Görgey's critics, the question remains, how far would he have to go to win acceptance of independence by Austria and the great powers, which were so vehemently opposed to any shift in the balance of power? Görgey believed that with Buda in Hungarian hands, he could negotiate a compromise from a position of strength. Even though victory over the Austrian army could have forced the negotiations he desired, in the final analysis, Görgey's conquest of Buda hurt his own plans for Hungary. It was a waste of time, scarce ammunition, and valuable personnel. It would have been more practical to encircle the Austrian garrison in the castle area and continue the pursuit of the Austrian troops to the Leithia, while holding out an olive branch to the new emperor. Görgey's actions, no matter how questionable, were consistent with his political objectives to preserve the 1848 constitution. Such is the result when a soldier allows politics to determine his judgement. According to Clausewitz, "War is not merely a political act, but

also a real political instrument, a continuation of policy carried out by other means."

Consequently, Görgey saw Hungary's salvation as being a defensive proposition, not an offensive one. To conquer Austria was out of the question. He had to keep Hungarian independence alive, which could be achieved only by inducing the West to intervene or by compelling Austria to abandon the contest and seek a negotiated settlement. Kossuth had staunchly based his policy on the former. Görgey, a soldier, realized that without Western support the struggle could not be won; however, he was not prepared to risk the fortunes of Hungary on the uncertainties of Europe, but rather, to force the issue with Austria as long as Hungarian human, material, and spiritual resources could absorb the strain. Görgey believed the events of 14 April negated any assistance against Austria.²⁹ He also knew Austria's main problem was tactical - they had to defeat Hungary's armed forces, subdue the will of its people, and occupy the country. Such a solution could be achieved only by force of arms. Görgey understood the difficulty of this undertaking and correctly assumed that Austria could not accomplish this objective without Russian support. Therefore, when Nicholas made the decision to assist Austria and send 190,000 Russian troops into Hungary, Görgey knew that he had to force quickly the issue with Austria before the Russian action would dictate a final settlement.

Retreat and Surrender

The combined forces Hungary faced in the summer of 1849 numbered over 360,000 soldiers. Görgey's army consisted of about 62,000 troops. Haynau's Army of the Danube included four army corps and a Russian infantry division, loaned from Paskevich, and enjoyed a total strength of 83,000 men and 330 artillery pieces.³⁰ On 23 June Görgey convinced ministers and senior military officers to concentrate forces around Komárom in a last ditch effort to defeat the Austrians before they joined with the Russian troops entering Hungary from the north. Görgey rejected Dembinski's immediate plan to go south to Szeged since his army at Komárom was further from Szeged than either the Russians at Miskolc or the Austrians on the Czonczó line. He believed Dembinski could not execute an offensive against either enemy without immediately facing an engagement by both forces.³¹ Komárom offered the Hungarians a base to supply repeated attacks on the Austrians as long as supplies and morale lasted.³² Interior lines favored Görgey's Komárom plan; Komárom was closer to his supply lines. But the campaign's failure and Görgey's injury determined that the war should go to Szeged.

Görgey's decision to attack and defeat the Austrian armies before Russian troops could join them was strategically sound, although his suggestion to move the capital to Komárom was not. Even the tsar recognized and understood that Görgey's only choice for success was to defeat each opponent in turn before they joined forces against him. This was one of the reasons Nicholas was upset that Paskevich was unable to destroy Görgey's army at Vác on 15 July 1849, a failure official Russian history would blame on Haynau's recalcitrance in refusing to join with Paskevich. Haynau, who would move south rather than combine with Paskevich, refused to allow himself to be subordinated to the latter's command. Ironically, Görgey still worried Haynau, who feared that Görgey might attack west in Moravia. Consequently, Haynau was instrumental in having Austria approach Prussia to suggest they strengthen their forces in Silesia.³³ Such was the respect Görgey warranted from his adversaries. The divisiveness between Haynau and Paskevich and the failure of both Austria and Russia to complete plans for Görgey's defeat allowed Görgey the opportunity, after being injured and failing to defeat the Austrians, eventually to move south past Vác and down the Tisza and press forward with new plans. As developed by Kossuth and Klapka, the scheme was for Görgey to join with the two Hungarian corps in the south and attempt to defeat the Austrian troops led by Baron Josip Jelačić in the Bánát region. Görgey's march south through northern Hungary, although beyond the scope of this paper, was yet another example of his military prowess.

Görgey's decision to attack Komárom also illustrates his further involvement in Hungarian politics. There was more to this decision than military considerations. His distrust and rivalry with Kossuth was becoming more evident, and Görgey was determined to insure the operation of his independent command. He saw himself as representing the best hope for Hungary's future. In the evolution of modern warfare, politics, with its influence on strategy, plays an increasingly greater role on military decisions. In World War I, Erich von Falkenhayn struggled incessantly for a western front policy against the reluctance of the easterners Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. These confrontations led to lost opportunities and stalemate, which forced the war to continue with disastrous effects for Germany. Falkenhayn knew Germany could not win a long war, so he pressed the issue at Verdun in hopes of removing France from the conflict. He refused to adopt the eastern commanders' plan to place strategic predominance in the east for a Cannae decision against the Russian forces. Falkenhayn feared being drawn further into the Russian hinterland like Napoleon. He only saw disaster in this policy. Görgey's decision was similar in his hope of removing Austria at Komárom. Görgey's strategy, however, had tangible military objectives: the destruction of the Austrian army.

Falkenhayn chose Verdun for its nationalistic value to the French. He planned to bleed them white in the hopes of forcing them to surrender. Görgey hoped to follow the strategy of Frederick II during the Seven Years' War. Outside of negotiations Görgey had no other recourse for military victory but to defeat his opponents in turn before they joined forces against him.

This final campaign is filled with intrigue and uncertainty on both sides. The combined Austro-Russian invasion caused contradictions and distrust among both states as well as the Hungarian leadership. Criticism abounded with no group or individual beyond reproach. In such circumstances, the accumulated stress pressed individuals to the breaking point. On the Hungarian side, however, Görgey bears the brunt of criticism. István Deák stated that Görgey's actions during this period reflected his "confused logic with its mixture of loyalist-legitimist and radical-revolutionary concepts."³⁴ Deák believes that Görgey's offensive, to force the issue of a negotiated peace, would have been more appropriate months earlier; however, in June 1849, it was too late and resulted only in a series of defeats and a wasteful bleeding of Hungary's best army.³⁵ If this was indeed the truth, it would have made sense for Görgey to have negotiated a settlement in June rather than August 1849. Also, if there was no hope of victory and Görgey's plan was doomed to fail and cause an unnecessary waste of human life, should Görgey's decision to surrender be criticized as an act of treachery? Or was it the sound policy of a soldier-statesman? Would critics have been satisfied had Görgey, like Falkenhayn at Verdun, followed a policy that would have wasted human life without the purpose of achieving a tangible objective, all for the sake of honor? Görgey's choice, along with his behavior, determined his fate in Hungarian historiography, but his decision spared the Hungarian nation useless suffering and possibly might have helped to pave an easier path for reconciliation in 1867. The continuation of the struggle to a futile conclusion might have left deeper scars between the Austrian and Hungarian combatants. A future compromise might have been more difficult to achieve. Continuation of the war could only have prolonged the suffering.

Like Görgey, Lee had contemplated a similar policy during the last year of the Civil War when he withdrew from Petersburg, Virginia, in 1865. Finally in supreme control of all Confederate forces, Lee knew, because of a lack of troops, resources, and time, that the South's only hope for military success lay in joining forces with General Joe Johnston's Army of Tennessee in North Carolina. They could then attack and defeat Union General William T. Sherman's army before turning their attention to Grant's forces in Virginia. If Grant and Sherman were to join forces, defeat would be axiomatic for the South. Unfortunately for Lee, Grant prevented the junction of Southern forces

from occurring, and Lee surrendered to him at Appomattox. However, even if this junction had taken place, the South's defeat was just a matter of time. The same scenario was in store for Görgey. His chances for a military solution were at best slim to none. Hope, after his failure to defeat Haynau, lay in the consolidation of all Hungarian troops in the south to defeat the Austrians, prolonging the war, and, in addition, in the chance that some sort of wedge could be driven between the Russians and Austrians that would facilitate either a negotiated settlement favorable for Hungary or intervention by the western democracies. Görgey was looking for the best possible deal. Victory was a quixotic illusion. It was something Kossuth still believed possible. According to Ian Roberts, "Unlike Kossuth who was first and foremost a politician who found himself having to deal with military affairs by virtue of the office he held, Görgey was a professional soldier of a distinctly practical nature."³⁰ Unfortunately for Görgey and Hungary, his Appomattox lay ahead at Világos.

Görgey's reputation was seriously tarnished by his surrender. Accusations abound concerning his alleged treachery, but Görgey did not go south for the purpose of surrendering his forces. Once at Arad, where he found no troops, he proceeded to send the First Corps of General József Nagy Sándor to Temesvár in order to reinforce Dembinski, who was to be at Arad but had changed his plans.³⁷ This is not the behavior of one who is determined to surrender; on the contrary, it shows Görgey's intent to continue the struggle. He was still determined to work out the best deal for Hungary, and his army was still his best bargaining chip. Even in southern Hungary his last ditch defense was an offensive against Austria.³⁸ It was Dembinski's defeat on 9 August that ended the last probability of a successful offensive against Austria. According to Görgey,

The further continuance of our active resistance to the armies of the Allies could now at most promote personal, no longer national interest... [the country] might at least be freed from the horrible misery of war.³⁹

After his surrender to the Russians, Görgey's reputation might still have been saved had he been included as one of those punished at Arad. Görgey seems to have even expected such punishment. The Tsar, however, intervened with Vienna to spare Görgey's life. After all the Tsar had done for Francis Joseph, it would have been a grave insult to deny Nicholas' request. Both the Tsar and Paskevich, who gave Görgey money for his expenses because even as a prisoner, he had to pay for his own travel, believed that the Hungarians should be granted leniency. The Tsar sent the Tsarevich Alexander II to Francis Joseph to inform the young monarch that Nicholas favored punishing

only the ringleaders and pardoning those who had been led astray. The Tsar advocated a policy of clemency and firmness.⁴⁰ Later, a Council of Ministers, chaired by Francis Joseph, decided Görgey's fate, but the Tsar's other requests went unheeded and he was outraged by the executions at Arad. He believed that Lajos Batthyány, the former Prime Minister, deserved his fate, but not the generals who had surrendered to the Russians.⁴¹ Such action may explain the comments of "one contemporary Slovak observer who wrote at the end of the campaign, the Russians returned to their own country blessed by the Slovaks, respected by the Hungarians and filled with hatred for the Germans".⁴²

Görgey's military successes, like Clausewitz's maxims in this text,⁴³ are buried, abandoned, and forgotten in a sea of conjecture. Klapka, a harsh critic of Görgey's actions, wrote that he should have been a Cromwell,⁴⁴ an interesting comment by someone who attacked Görgey's character and accused him of conspiracy to make himself dictator. In Kalpka's statement, however, rests the problem of Görgey's reclamation: preconceived ideas of who Görgey should have been and what he should have done. It is Görgey's misfortune to have followed the dictates of his own conscience. Such is the lonely life of the individual on top who offers no excuses but accepts accountability for his actions. Victory has many parents but defeat has only one child. Görgey was given the incumbency of that child. It was a responsibility he accepted in the Spartan manner of a soldier, as soldiers have always done. Lee was no different. Duty called and was answered. It was an accountability that was buried with Görgey along with his remains in the national cemetery, where Judit and I inadvertently discovered them. It was a responsibility that Kossuth refused to accept. Perhaps for this courageous act alone, Görgey deserves at least a respectable monument over his grave, but to some that might only unearth and renew an old debate that is better left undisturbed.

Notes

1. István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution, Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848-1849* (New York, 1979) 183.
2. Arden Bucholz, "Hans Delbrück and Modern Military History," *The Historian*: 3 (Spring 1993) 517.
3. Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, 183.
4. Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1971), 288.
5. Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Art of War* (Albany, New York, 1940), 233.
6. Fair, Charles, *From the Jaws of Victory* (New York, 1971), 11-12.
7. Martin Blumenson and James L. Stokesbury, *Masters of the Art of Command* (Boston, 1975), x.

8. Artúr Görgey, *Életem és működésem Magyarországon 1848-ban és 1849-ben* [My life and acts in Hungary, 1848-1849], vol. 1 (Budapest, 1988), 138.
9. *Ibid.*, 285-291.
10. *Ibid.*, vol. II, 230-231.
11. *W.Ibid.*, vol. 1, 429.
12. *Ibid.*, vol. II, 110.
13. J. F. C. Fuller, *Grant and Lee, A Study in Personality and Generalship* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1982), 42.
14. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. I, 286.
15. Ian W. Roberts, *Nicholas I and the Russian Intervention in Hungary* (New York, 1991), 73.
16. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. 1, 298. Görgey abandoned a garrison at Lipótvár (Leopoldstadt) to the Austrians in order to preserve his army.
17. Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, 235.
18. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. I, 446.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. II, 207-225.
20. Roberts, *Nicholas I*, 70-71.
21. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. II, 13-14.
22. *Ibid.*, vol II, 50.
23. *Ibid.*, 66.
24. *Ibid.*, 63-64.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Roberts, *Nicholas I*, 138.
27. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. II, 190.
28. Roberts, *Nicholas I*, 109.
29. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. II, 53.
30. Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, 308.
31. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. II, 242.
32. *Ibid.*, 246-247.
33. Roberts, *Nicholas I*, 157-160.
34. Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, 307.
35. *Ibid.*, 307-308.
36. Roberts, *Nicholas I*, 73.
37. *Ibid.*, 174.
38. Görgey, *Életem és működésem*, vol. II, 363-364.
39. *Ibid.*, 388.
40. Roberts, *Nicholas I*, 185.
41. *Ibid.*, 206.
42. *Ibid.*, 73.
43. Clausewitz's quotes for this work were cited from Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982).
44. György Klapka, *Memoirs of the War of Independence in Hungary*, trans. by Otto Wenckstern (London, 1850), vol. I, 183-184.