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Fighting Evil with Weapons of the Spirit: The Christian Churches in Wartime Hungary

Leslie Laszlo

There would be hard to find in history a parallel to the wild swings of the political pendulum which occurred in Hungary in the wake of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I. Within less than a year, between October 31st 1918 and July 31st 1919 to be exact, the country passed from a conservative constitutional monarchy, through five months of a liberal, though increasingly left-leaning democratic republic, to one-hundred days of a Soviet type Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and then back again to right-wing authoritarianism in a nominal monarchy, without a monarch. The years following these times of troubles were dubbed the "Christian Course" since the Counter-Revolution being consolidated under Admiral Miklós Horthy's Regency claimed to have been inspired by Christian moral principles. While the regime's "Christianity" was questionable and manifest mostly in anti-Semitic demagoguery, the Christian Churches did, in fact, receive important political favours and material aid from the government, which considered them the most solid pillars of a stable social order.

The most important vehicle of Church influence in Hungary was, undoubtedly, its near-monopoly of public education. Not only were over two-thirds of the grammar-schools and teacher's colleges, as well as about half of the secondary schools, operated directly by the Churches, but they also provided religious instruction—a mandatory subject for all students up to the university level—in the "secular" state and communal schools. While it would be hard to measure the impact of school indoctrination and its residue in adult life, one would have to assume that such a massive and lengthy exposure—we are speaking of a quarter of a century, 1919-1944—did definitely contribute to the belief system and character formation of the population. Hence also the co-responsibility of the Churches for the ethical-moral standards and behaviour of Hungarians during

the times of trial which were to come. It is not enough to say that the clergy was of the people, that the Churches were part of the nation: their role was that of teachers of the nation and as such they cannot escape the judgment of history, be that praise or blame.

This essay will attempt to give an account, even if short and incomplete, of the little-known efforts of the Christian Churches in Hungary to counter the influence of Nazism, its anti-human and anti-Christian ideology. To the degree that the Christian population of Hungary, or at least part of it, responded to these promptings, resisted Nazism and helped the persecuted, one can say that all was not in vain: indeed, whenever the depressingly bleak picture of those times is illuminated by rays of humane behaviour, heroism and charity, we do find committed Christians in the first row among those fighting evil.

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Having been rescued from the atheistic Communist dictatorship of Béla Kun, with their former privileges and wealth restored, the Churches were naturally thankful to Horthy and supported his regime with its loud protestations of patriotism and Christianity. They even participated — while there were, of course, exceptions — in the anti-Semitic hysteria, a gut reaction by the Christian majority to the Red Terror of 1919 which was headed by communists of Jewish origin. Leading churchmen advocated restrictive measures against the Jews who had a disproportionately large share of the economic wealth and were overrepresented in the most lucrative professions (such as medicine, law, journalism, theatre and the arts), and also among academics and university students. Although during the relatively prosperous years of the twenties the conservative Prime Minister, Count István Bethlen, succeeded in taming much of the right-radicalism and anti-Semitism of the first years of the Counter-Revolution, the Great Depression, which hit agricultural Hungary with devastating brutality, and then the rise of Hitler, once again upset the political equilibrium.

The triumph of National Socialism in Germany had fateful consequences for Hungary as well. On the one hand, the Third Reich, flaunting its power and its eagerness to use it, attracted into its orbit Hungarian foreign policy, which was determined by

revisionism and had up to this time leaned on Mussolini's Italy, while at the same time the ideas of National Socialism were undermining the Hungarian political and social order. All the factors and circumstances which made the victory of Nazism possible in Germany—the passionate nationalism born of bitterness over the lost war, the laying of blame for this defeat on left-wing socialism and on an international Jewish conspiracy, the unsolved social problems, extensive unemployment, the disillusionment with the existing order on the part of thousands of unemployed university graduates and their readiness for experiments that promised radical change—all these things were present in Hungary also. As a matter of fact, the radical right wing that had appeared in the counter-revolutionary movement of Szeged could claim priority in raising many points also contained in Hitler's program. There was quite a vogue in Hungary for castigating the feudalism of the aristocratic landowning class and the plutocratic rule of Jewish bankers years before the world press started paying attention to similar pronouncements by the Führer.

Thus when Hitler denounced the Treaty of Versailles and called for breaking asunder—by violence if necessary—the chains of the dictated peace treaties it was only natural that he should be enthusiastically applauded by Hungarians.

But even if we disregard patriotic fervour and other emotional factors, it is not at all surprising that the obvious and grave social ills besetting Hungary and the seeming indifference to them of the reactionary ruling class, which clung rigidly to its privileges, drove many into a camp of right-wing radicalism—all the more, since the communist experiment of Béla Kun had discredited for a long time to come the alternative of the radical left. [1]

In the beginning few people recognized Hitler's real intentions and the historic significance of his rule. Hungarian public opinion was not especially concerned about the fact that the new dictatorship abolished democratic freedoms in Germany. The Hungarian press, which was largely of a nationalistic and right-wing orientation, had long accustomed the Hungarian public to seeing mainly the defects of the democratic systems of Czechoslovakia or France and to sympathizing instead with the authoritarian governments, more akin to the Hungarian system, of such countries as Poland, Italy and Portugal and to admiring Pilsudski, Mussolini and Salazar. Later, during the Spanish Civil

War, this same press naturally took the side of General Franco who was fighting against the "Reds." In the beginning it seemed that the change in Germany belonged in this same category the number of effeminate, decadent, corrupt and almost anarchic democracies had again been reduced by one and the German people had also found its heroic leader, who would, on the basis of a nationalist and socialist view of the world, lead his nation into the better European future then emerging.

Recognition of the true face of Nazism was slow in coming, and even when it came it was confined to certain circles. The foreign policy of the Hungarian governments that followed one another tied Hungary ever more closely to Germany, until finally the two countries became wartime allies. As a result, official government pronouncements, as well as the press (which was under the direction of the government) remained friendly to Germany until the end, and attempted, in the interests of this friendship—and even more out of fear of this powerful ally—to gloss over the unpleasant features of Nazism. This is how it could happen that a good part of the Hungarian public was convinced up until the final defeat at the end of the war—and many remained convinced even thereafter—that Hitler was a statesman of genius and a man of high moral character, that National Socialism was unquestionably superior to other ideologies, that the German army was invincible, and—most incredible of all—that the Führer and those around him were pro-Hungarian. After the victorious conclusion of the war, or so they thought, Hitler meant to assign to Great Hungary, re-established with his help and treated as an equal partner, an important role in the New Europe.[2] That not everyone shared these delusions can be ascribed partly to the efforts of the Churches.

We must, of course, remark right at this point that just as the counterrevolutionary Horthy regime sympathized with the right-wing, authoritarian governments of Europe, the Hungarian Churches did not see much reason either to find fault with the fascism of friendly Italy. Benito Mussolini was not only a sincere friend of Hungary—and in this instance propaganda corresponded more or less to reality[3]—and not only was he the first to take up the cause of revision of Hungary's postwar frontiers, but it was he who by the Lateran Treaty had assured the sovereignty of the Pope over the Vatican state and had thus gained for himself undying credit in the eyes of Catholics all over the world.

In addition, many Christians, dreading communism, considered the vigorous and dynamic movement of fascism the most effective antidote to communism, rather than the old parliamentary systems that seemed tired and chaotic.

In replaying the happenings in Austria, the Catholic press was on the side of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg in their struggle against the godless "Reds," just as later it supported Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Sympathy among Catholics for the right-wing dictatorships was heightened in addition by the fact that Mussolini, Salazar, Dollfuss and Franco had established in the Catholic countries under their leadership the occupational corporations urged by the social teachings of the Popes and had based their new governmental systems on these corporations, rejecting the parliamentary system based on popular representation. Few people were aware, however, that this corporative constitution, supposedly superior to the parliamentary system of the Western democracies, served in practice merely to camouflage dictatorship. [4]

Hitler's rise met a very different reception from the Churches. It is true that he also began his rule with the conclusion of a Concordat with the Holy See. But he at once proceeded to break it: he took away the schools and other institutions of the Churches and propagated a neo-pagan ideology directly opposed to Christianity, and he put the entire machinery of the state, the schools, the press and the organization of the Hitler Jugend, which was designed to re-educate youth, into the service of this ideology. The Catholic world learned of the fate that awaited the Churches under the aegis of the Third Reich from the occasional cries of protest, still able at times to break to the surface, of the German faithful and from the protests of the Holy See, while the Protestants learned the grim truth from their German co-religionists, especially Karl Barth, who had gone into exile. [5] The Hungarian faithful could observe at close range the subversive activities of the Nazis in neighbouring and friendly Austria. The brutal murder of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss in 1934 aroused universal shock and indignation. The sorrow and sympathy of the Catholic public was heightened by the fact that the press extolled Dollfuss as the model of the truly and deeply religious statesman. [6]

The thrust of National Socialism toward territorial and ideological conquests did not, however, stop at the borders of the

German linguistic area. Its goal in Hungary was, on the one hand, to organize the German-speaking minority, the *Volksdeutsche*, and to make them into Nazis and into the "Fifth Column" of the Third Reich. And on the other, it attempted, by extending material and moral support to the Hungarian right-wing movements, to bring about the establishment of a Nazi-type regime in Hungary, which was, of course, to be in a subordinate and dependent relationship to the German *Herrenvolk* and its Führer.

The conservative Hungarian ruling class could naturally not watch these activities without attempting to intervene. Regent Horthy and his governments were reluctant, in spite of the ever tightening foreign political and economic connections with Germany, to endure interference in Hungary's internal affairs. Even in the face of grave pressures, the *Volksdeutsche* were not surrendered to the mercies of the Reich until the German military occupation of Hungary in the last year of the war. And the Germans were able to establish the Arrow Cross in power only after the forcible removal of Regent Horthy. [7]

Depending on the fluctuations of the domestic and external political balance, Horthy at times appointed definitely pro-German politicians, such as Gömbös and later Sztójay, to head the government, while at other times he chose definite Anglophiles, such as Teleki and Kállay. [8] Given the existing situation, of course, the hands of the latter were tied as well. In public they had to assume a pro-German right-wing position, but, as will be shown later in this paper, secretly they sabotaged the aims of the Germans, repressed the extreme right-wing movements, and urged the intellectual élite of the nation to opposition against Nazi ideas.

The Christian Churches also viewed with increasing concern the inroads right-wing radicalism was making into Hungarian public life. The harmonious relationship that had developed between the Church and the State during the 1920s cooled perceptibly as early as the premiership of Gömbös (1932-1937), an imitator of Mussolini and Hitler. [9] During the succeeding years, when anti-Nazi forces began to organize in the face of ever increasing German pressure and the rapid spread of native National Socialist movements, the Churches willingly offered their cooperation. This cooperation was evident in the support given to the ostentatiously anti-Nazi behaviour of the legitimist

aristocracy,[10] and in the close connections maintained with the liberal-conservatives, who were roughly the same individuals who wrote for the *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), a daily that had been started in 1938 with an expressly anti-Nazi orientation by the former Prime Minister Bethlen. It was manifested also in the fact that, while the Christians continued to be unwilling to come to terms with Marxist Social Democracy on the ideological plane, they nevertheless considered that the existence of the Social Democratic Party was in the given situation not only useful but even necessary. With the unfortunate Austrian example before their eyes, they did not urge the suppression of the Social Democratic Party but concluded instead an unspoken armistice with it for the duration of the common danger.[11]

We must point out as an important factor that National Socialism enjoyed in the case of Hungary a particularly great attraction in the fact that, in contrast to Marxist internationalism, it appeared in a national guise. In this way, while on the one hand it won the dissatisfied lower classes with its promise of social revolution, it gained ground among the middle class, and especially among the youth of the intelligentsia, with its loud anti-bolshevist, anti-Semitic and above all "deeply Hungarian" (*mélymagyar*) nationalistic slogans. As a result, even many outside observers could see only a quantitative difference between the National Socialist ideology and the "Szeged idea" sponsored by the ruling counterrevolutionary Horthy regime, and consequently they did not see the danger, or took it too lightly.[12] Resistance was further hindered by the fact that the Hungarian National Socialist movements differed in a very important respect from the German prototype. While the latter rejected Christianity and attempted instead to force on the German people a "German religion" concocted from ancient Germanic legends and from the "blood and race" myths of Alfred Rosenberg, the Hungarian extreme right—with insignificant exceptions—professed itself decidely "Christian." The various National Socialist parties in Hungary not only did not attack the Christian Churches in their programs, but promised positive protection for religion and Christian morality and assigned an important role to the Churches in the new order.[13] Ferenc Szálasi, who after 1938 was the leader of the Arrow Cross movement and from October 16, 1944 was for a few months head of state as "National Leader," remained a practising Catholic to

the end, and liked to imagine himself a crusader defending the Christian West against atheistic bolshevism. This show of Christianity had quite a confusing effect on the judgment of the faithful, and not infrequently even on that of priests and ministers. Their confusion was only increased when some bishops, priests, ministers and religious laymen raised their voices, in speech or in writing, against the unbridled anti-Semitic agitation carried on by the extreme right and branded it un-Christian. Was it not the Christian Churches who in the past had waged war most vigorously against the inroads of Jews in economic and intellectual life and against their deleterious influence on Christian morality? Had not such outstanding Christians as Bishop Prohászka the Jesuit priest and fiery orator Béla Bangha or the great leader of the Calvinists, Bishop László Ravasz, been anti-Semitic? But let us leave the Jewish question apart, since it requires a much more detailed discussion, and let us examine instead what concrete activities the Hungarian Churches undertook to counteract the challenge of the Nazi attack on the basic tenets of Christianity.

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First we should mention the fact that, as their members came to realize the common danger, a movement toward unity was born within the Christian Churches. The goal of this movement was the defence of the common values of Christianity against the anti-Christian teachings of both bolshevism and Nazism. The idea of union was raised by the militant Jesuit Béla Bangha, who had the reputation of being an implacable opponent of Protestants, in the issue of February, 1937, of the prestigious *Magyar Szemle* (Hungarian Review), edited by Count István Bethlen and Gyula Szekfű. [14] His article, which created something of a sensation, was received favourably and enthusiastically by both sides. It was in this same year that the Franciscan Kelemen Király returned to Hungary. As the pastor of the Hungarian colony in Berlin since 1934, he had observed at close range the heroic struggle of the "Confessing Church" (Bekennende Kirche) of the German Lutherans against Nazism, and he had also witnessed the cooperation that had developed among the Christian Churches of Germany. It was under these influences that Father Király became the apostle of the unity movement.

He recounted his experiences in Germany and urged Christians to join forces against the Nazi danger in numerous lectures and speeches, as well as in his book published in 1942 and entitled *A keresztény egyházak egysége különös tekintettel a németországi protestantizmusra* (Unity of the Christian Churches with Special Reference to Protestantism in Germany), and in the monthly *Egység Útja* (The Road to Unity), which he started in 1942 with the approval of the Prince Primate. [15] It is true that neither the good will and readiness of both sides to cooperate, nor the discussions conducted in the press and in meetings for unity, nor yet the exchange of views carried on in the pages of the *Pester Lloyd* by the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz and Krizosztom Kelemen, Archabbot of Pannonhalma or their personal meeting which created a great sensation, led in the end to a *de facto* union, that is to an actual unification of the Christian Churches. But these attempts at achieving union did have some beneficial results. They put an end to the earlier fierce battles between the various denominations, and at the same time they made the clergy and the faithful aware of the danger threatening the Christian religion and of the need for cooperation and common action among the Churches in the face of this danger. [16] Only with these antecedents could it happen, for instance, that when at the end of 1938 German pressure forced the banning of the Catholic weekly *Korunk Szava* (Word of Our Age), which had courageously criticized Nazism, it was the *Protestáns Szemle* (Protestant Review) that came to its defense against the *Völkischer Beobachter* which had commented on the ban with malicious joy. [17]

The most significant event on the Catholic side in the struggle against Nazism was without doubt the issuing by Pope Pius XI in the spring of 1937 of the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*. In this document the Vicar of Christ, leaving aside all diplomatic affectations, used harsh words to condemn the persecution of religion in Germany as well as the teachings of Nazism as contrary to natural law and incompatible with the tenets of Christianity.

The Hungarian Catholic press expounded the encyclical in detail, [18] and the Actio Catholica summarized the teaching of the Pope in a pamphlet written in a popular style entitled *Nemzetiszínű pogányság* (Paganism in national colours). Of this leaflet, which contained the criticism and condemnation of

National Socialist ideology in the Pope's own words, 300,000 copies were published and distributed to a wide public by the Catholic rectories and by the various Catholic associations and organizations.[19] In the same year that the encyclical was issued there appeared a study contrasting Nazi racial theories with Christian teaching written by Kálmán Klemm (later Kálmán Nyéki), a professor of the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Budapest, and entitled *Kereszténység vagy faji vallás?* (Christianity or a religion of race?)[20] In 1939 a book entitled *Világnézeti válaszok* (Ideological Answers) by the immensely popular Father Bangha, whose Sunday sermons were regularly carried by the radio, achieved such unprecedented success that three new editions had to be printed during that same year. In this work, written in ordinary language, the learned Jesuit defended the tenets of the Catholic Church against teachings branded erroneous by the Church, such as Nazi ideas on race, the nation, the state, the individual and the community, religion and anti-Semitism.[21]

In the meantime both the Catholic and the Protestant press followed with close attention domestic and foreign political events and on occasion sharply criticized the activities of the German Nazis as well as of the Hungarian extreme right.

The banned Catholic weekly *Korunk Szava* (Word of Our Age) soon reappeared under the new name of *Jelenkor* (The Present Age) and, together with the *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), which was also edited in a strongly Catholic spirit, it continued to fight courageously against the spiritual poison of Nazism until its closure under the German occupation in the spring of 1944.

In providing the opportunity for a public confession of the Christian Catholic faith by hundreds of thousands, the celebrations in 1938 commemorating the nine-hundredth anniversary of the death of St. Stephen, first king of Hungary, and the XXXIV Eucharistic World Congress held at the same time in Budapest served to strengthen spiritual resistance to Nazism. The pride of Catholics was much increased by the great respect with which the Protestant Head of State Miklós Horthy received the papal legate Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) and extended hospitality to him in the Royal Palace. The Regent's Catholic wife took part with exemplary piety in all the religious celebrations, as did Prime Minister Béla Imrédy and the Catholic members of his government. At the same time it was

impossible not to notice that the invited guests from Germany, and from recently annexed Austria, were missing from among the ecclesiastical dignitaries and pilgrims who came in great numbers from every continent to be present at these magnificent festivities in Budapest. It was also painfully offensive that of all the European radio networks only the German (and Austrian) stations refused to transmit the closing speech of the papal legate, which because of heavy rain he delivered in the studios of the Hungarian radio. They did so in spite of the fact that Cardinal Pacelli spoke on this occasion in German. Or could this be precisely the explanation for their refusal?

The extreme right in Hungary was emboldened by the success of the *Anschluss* and started to throw its weight around ever more audaciously. To bring it under control Imrédy forbade soldiers and public employees to be members of any political party or to be active in party politics at all, and he had Ferenc Szálasi, who by this time was indisputably the most popular leader of the National Socialist movement in Hungary, imprisoned. However, the self-abasement of the Western democracies at Munich caused Imrédy to abandon his Anglophile and anti-German policies, and this change manifested itself in a strong shift to the right in his domestic policies as well. Because of this, Horthy forced Imrédy to resign in February, 1939, and chose as his successor Count Pál Teleki, who was an irreconcilable foe of Nazism. Teleki organized a secret resistance movement with threads extending over the entire country, which he called "intellectual defence of the nation."[22] The Churches were the mainstay of this "resistance." Their priests and ministers utilized the various institutions and movements under their direction to educate the youth and the broad masses of the people to adhere to the truly Christian and Hungarian view of the world, in accordance with the wishes of the Prime Minister. Nothing illustrates conditions at that time and the unreal quality of Hungary's independence better than the fact that the secretariat of this "intellectual defence of the nation," which had been established at the initiative of the Prime Minister, was under his personal direction, and had its offices in the building of the Prime Ministry, was forced nevertheless to operate under a cover name, and that its anti-Nazi pamphlets and regular newsletter had to be printed in a hidden printing shop and distributed secretly. It happened more than once, anomalous though it was, that the organs of the

Ministry of the Interior, mainly the county authorities, confiscated the "subversive" writings originating in the Prime Ministry and initiated criminal proceedings against those distributing them.

Following the tragic death of Count Pál Teleki, the "intellectual defence of the nation" sponsored by him ceased also and its secretariat was disbanded.[23] But there was greater need than ever for the dissemination of information and for intellectual resistance at this time, especially after Hungary had entered the war on the German side. Realizing this, Antal Ullein-Reviczky, a highly-placed official of the Foreign Ministry and later Ambassador to Stockholm, decided to organize a resistance group based on personal contacts and asked István Horthy, the Regent's son and later his Deputy Regent, to head this undertaking. Prominent among those invited to participate were Prince Primate Jusztinián Cardinal Serédi, the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz, the Lutheran Bishop Sándor Raffay, as well as the Provincial of the Franciscan Friars, an order that was popular among the lower classes. The task of the ecclesiastical leaders was primarily to instruct, through the lower clergy, the people and especially the youth in a Christian and Hungarian—and thus anti-Nazi—spirit. According to the testimony of Ullein-Reviczky, all the ecclesiastical leaders named above gladly accepted this task.[24]

Miklós Kállay, who during his tenure of two years (1942-1944) as Prime Minister worked to free the country from the fatal embrace of Germany and to lead it back from co-belligerency into neutrality, also speaks with the greatest appreciation of the resistance of the Churches against Nazism. He mentions the Catholic hierarchy among those who unceasingly urged him on to stronger resistance against the Germans.[25] And in speaking of the Upper House of Parliament he emphasizes that both the Catholic and the Protestant ecclesiastical leaders—among the latter especially the Calvinist Bishop László Ravasz—opposed National Socialist and anti-Semitic agitation in a most courageous manner.[26]

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During the war years repeated attempts were made by the extreme right to merge, in the name of national unity and

cooperation, the various social organizations of differing ideological leanings. In other words, they wished to induct, following the fascist and German examples, all university students into a single organization, all workers into another, all peasants into yet another, and so on. This would naturally have meant that all the religiously oriented mass organizations, such as the Hungarian Scouts Association, which cooperated closely with the Churches, would have been disbanded and right-wing ideology would have been granted a position of monopoly. These attempts, however, came to naught as a result of the resistance of the Churches. And when the Levente organization was established for the military training of youth, the Churches were able to gain the concession of being allowed to organize, along the lines of army chaplaincies, Levente chaplaincies also. They attempted to counteract through these chaplaincies the one-sided extreme right-wing influence that a considerable part of the Levente instructors and military training officers represented.[27]

In those areas of Hungary inhabited by a German-speaking population the Churches conducted a tenacious struggle for the survival of Hungarian feeling and of Christianity against the re-Germanizing and Nazi propaganda of the *Volksbund*. At pressure from the Third Reich, the authorities pushed the establishment of German-language schools even in communities where the majority of the parents had voted for Hungarian as the language of instruction. Where there was no suitable German-speaking teacher, one was imported from Germany—always a thoroughgoing Nazi. Prince Primate Serédi and the other ecclesiastical authorities resisted these efforts to the end, and in many cases they succeeded in saving the denominational and Hungarian character of schools in German communities.[28] The unbridled Pan-German and Nazi propaganda was effective primarily among the Germans living in compact settlements on the Dunántúl. Count Teleki requested József Pehm, pastor of Zalaegerszeg, to undertake the work of counteracting this. Father Pehm fought against Nazism in words and writing, especially by means of pamphlets printed in the press established by him.[29] In 1941, when worship of things German reached its zenith, József Pehm changed his German-sounding name to Mindszenty, a name by which he later became known all over the world. This name-Magyarization signified a courageous profession of loyalty at that time when Germans who had in the

past assumed Hungarian names were re-Germanizing their names *en masse*.

Finally we should mention one of the most significant literary products of the Catholic intellectual resistance, namely the *Katolikus írók új magyar kalauza* (The new Hungarian guide for Catholic writers), which appeared in 1941.[30] The title is an allusion to a work of Péter Cardinal Pázmány, the great defender of the Catholic faith during the Counter-Reformation. His *Az igazságra vezérlő kalauz* (Guide leading to truth) had provided guidance in the chaos prevailing in tenets of faith at the time of the Reformation. According to the preface of the editor, József Almásy, the authors of this latter-day work wished, in the same way as Pázmány, to act as guides, to show the Catholic faithful the road leading out of the ideological chaos of the modern age. In this massive volume the intellectual élite of Hungarian Catholicism, both priests and laymen, discussed in seventeen essays problems of the age which affected everyone and expounded the stand of the Church in relation to them. The subject matter was comprehensive and varied. Recognized authorities discussed the questions of "Literature and Catholicism" (Sándor Sík), "Modern Ecclesiastical Art in Hungary" (Antal Somogyi), "Church Music and the Modern Soul" (Alajos Werner), as well as "The Hungarian Catholic View of History" (Gyula Szekfű). Several essays were devoted to the relationship of the individual, society, and the Church for example, "The Spiritual Problems of Modern Man" (József Tiefenthaler), "Family and Education" (Mihály Marczell), "Our Youth and the Church" (Gedeon Péterffy), and "Christian Social Reform" (József Cavallier). The most important parts of the *Kalauz* are, however, those chapters in which the writers attempt, by expounding Divine revelation and Catholic philosophy, to differentiate the Catholic view of the world clearly from the erroneous views then in fashion and to point out the correct course of Catholic politics. Into this group belong the essays "The Lord has Spoken" (József Ijjas), "The Philosophy of Our Age" (Pál Kecskés), "The Ordering Role of Natural Law" (Sándor Horváth), "Man and the Realm of Truth" (Ferenc Erdey), "Religion and Race" (Kálmán Nyéki),[31] "Politics and Morality" (Ferenc Ibrányi), and "The Bases of Hungarian Catholic Politics" (József Almásy).

Among the above essays we should single out, as most

significant in extent and scholarly weight, Professor Sándor Horváth's seventy page discussion of natural law, in which this Dominican priest, who was known all over Europe,[32] combats the totalitarian state and its demands with the weapons of Thomistic philosophy. We should also make special mention of the essay by Ferenc Erdey, in which he criticizes the bible of Nazi racial theory, Alfred Rosenberg's notorious *Der Mythus des XX Jahrhunderts*. The article by Kálmán Nyéki examines the "Germanic religion," built on the worship of blood and race, which was propagated by Professor J.W. Hauer of the University of Tübingen and points out its incompatibility with Christian teaching. Noteworthy further is the article by József Almásy, in which he criticizes Hungarian Catholic politics but at the same time points out the path to a worthier future. Shortly after the appearance of the *Kalauz*, Almásy published a small volume[33] that attracted much attention in which he applied the yardstick of the Ten Commandments to Hungarian public life and found, beneath the varnish of "Christian Hungarian politics," very little of true Christian attitudes and actions. Almásy, in the footsteps of Old Testament prophets, did not merely castigate the violation of the Lord's commandments but exhorted his readers at the same time to a more faithful adherence to them in the future. In his book he presented the outlines of a Christian political course which, based on faith in God and love for man, would seek the good of society without sacrificing the dignity and freedom of the individual and would rest firmly on justice and truthfulness.

It can well be asked, of course, how many people read the writings enumerated above and others similar to them, and whether they had any effect. We cannot answer these questions. We have merely attempted here to show that the challenge of Nazism did not go unanswered: there was an intellectual resistance in Hungary, there were politicians, priests, writers, and scholars who, realizing their responsibility as educators of the nation, confronted the tide of brown paganism, which seemed to be sweeping everything before it, and took up the battle with pen and word against its propaganda warfare. Anyone who had ears to hear and eyes to read could not have remained ignorant of the Christian teaching that condemned Nazism.[34]

NOTES

1. For a history of the Hungarian National Socialist movements, as well as a penetrating analysis of their social roots, ideological content, and goals, see the essay about Hungary by István Deák in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right; A Historical Profile* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966): 364-407.

2. In reality, Hitler entertained a barely concealed antipathy toward Hungarians. This is proved by many documents, as well as by the unanimous testimony of those within the inner circle surrounding Hitler. See Stephen D. Kertész, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool; Hungary between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953): 38, 203.

3. See Nicholas Kállay, *Hungarian Premier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954): 175, 217.

4. Voices admonishing Catholics to caution *vis-a-vis* fascism, though rare, were not completely lacking. See, for example, the article entitled "Fasizmus és katolicizmus" (Fascism and Catholicism) in the Jesuit periodical *Magyar Kultúra,* 37 (1931): 5-10. The author of the article is identified only as an Italian university professor. The versatile worker for Hungarian Catholicism, Professor Béla Kovrig, stated as early as 1934 (in an article that appeared originally in the May issue of *Magyar Szemle,* XXI (1934)) that the state corporations set up by the Italian fascist regime do not correspond to the pertinent Catholic ideas, and he also expressed misgivings regarding the new Austrian constitution that had just been accepted. The author published this article once more in the volume entitled *Korfordulón* (At the threshold of a new age) (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1940): 164-80. This volume is an excellent illustration of Catholic political writing of the 1930s, since the articles and essays contained in it repeatedly accord enthusiastic praise to Mussolini, Salazar and the Spanish Right, but treat Hitler and National Socialism in a tone of caution and frequently of criticism.

It should be remarked that the other prominent Hungarian exponent of Catholic social teaching, Vid Mihelics, did not in the least share Kovrig's tolerant optimism toward Italian fascism and the other right-wing dictatorships. See Vid Mihelics, *Világproblémák és a katolicizmus* (World Problems and Catholicism) (Budapest: DOM kiadás, 1933): 136-51.

Austrian corporativism, which exercised a great attraction on Hungarian Catholics, was also criticized by some, and most sharply by József Almásy in his work *A tízparancsolat a közéletben* (The ten commandments of public life) (Budapest: Árkádia Könyvkiadó, 1942): 151-3.

5. Both of the Catholic and the Protestant press faithfully reported on the anti-Christian teachings and actions of the German National Socialists. Thus the column entitled "Külföldi krónika" (Events Abroad) of the *Katolikus Szemle* dealt during the 1930s primarily with events in Germany and with the persecution of Christians being carried out there.

Karl Barth, the anti-Nazi Protestant theologian of world renown, exercised a great influence on Hungarian Protestantism. During the 1930s his works were publicized and translated into Hungarian, and he himself was invited to make a lecture tour of Hungary, which he did in 1937. See István Kónya, *A magyar református egyház felső vezetésének politikai ideológiája a Horthy-korszakban*(The political ideology of the higher leadership of the Hungarian Calvinist Church during the Horthy Era) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967): 127-8; see also Gyula Gombos, *The Lean Years* (New York: The Kossuth Foundation, Inc., 1960): 33.

6. See, for example, the commemorative article about him entitled "Dollfuss vértanúsága" (The martyrdom of Dollfus) in *Katolikus Szemle,* XLVIII (1934): 580, as well as the lead-article "Dollfuss"by Count Iván Csekonics in *Magyar Kultura,* XXI (1934): 161-3.

7. On October 15, 1944, Horthy proclaimed Hungary's withdrawal from the war. Due to insufficient preparation and outright treason, the attempt failed. The next morning he was arrested by the SS and together with his wife, taken to Germany.

8. Imrédy began his tenure as Prime Minister as an Anglophile, and Bárdossy was "neutral"when he became Prime Minister. Only later did both turn increasingly toward

the Germans; this was precisely the reason that Horthy dismissed them. Considering the Regent's increasing antipathy toward Gömbös (who escaped forced resignation only because of his death) and further the dismissal of Darányi again because of his connections with the Germans and the Arrow Cross, as well as the fact that Horthy was forced by direct pressure from the Germans to appoint Sztójay and that he removed Sztójay as soon as this pressure decreased, we believe it can be stated with confidence that Horthy did not allow anyone to remain Prime Minister who entered into too close a relationship with the Germans or the Hungarian National Socialists.

9. This is shown on the Catholic side by the Christian Party's leaving the government. For the aversion toward Gömbös manifested by the leaders of the Calvinist Church, see Kónya, p. 73.

The following episode, which was related to the author by the late Baron Móric Kornfeld in the spring of 1965, illuminates the relationship of Gömbös and the Prince Primate.

Soon after he became Prime Minister, Gömbös called upon all public employees to take an oath of unconditional loyalty to him. Cardinal Serédi forbade the teaching staff of the Catholic schools to do this. Gömbös thereupon appeared in Esztergom, accompanied by Minister of Culture Bálint Hóman, in order to obtain an explanation of the Prince Primate's conduct. At their meeting, Cardinal Serédi explained—as he later recounted to Baron Kornfeld—that he did not know of any such thing as "unconditional obedience."Cardinal Serédi, who was a member of the Order of St. Benedict, said to Gömbös: "I am a member of a religious order, and thus I have bound myself by solemn vows to obedience to my superiors; but only *insofar as their commands do not conflict with the laws of God, of the Church, and of the Holy Order*. There does not exist on this earth the man or the authority that has the right to obligate someone to 'unconditional' obedience."It was obvious that the lecture did not exactly please Gömbös, but he did not press the matter further.

10. Thus at the mass meeting held in Körmend on October 10, 1937, which can be regarded as the first muster of troops of the anti-Nazi front that was gradually developing along the entire line from the conservative Right to the Social Democratic Left. See C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteen. A History of Modern Hungary, 1929/1945*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1956/1957), I: 183-4.

11. See the reply entitled "Szocialista békejobb" (Peace offer by the socialists) in *Katolikus Szemle* LI (1937): 693-5, to the article "Kereszténység és szocializmus" (Christianity and Socialism) by the Social Democratic writer Ferenc Fejtő in *Szép Szó* (August, 1937). The reply in *Katolikus Szemle* held that agreement on matters of principle between Catholicism and Marxist Social Democracy continued to be impossible, but it considered tactical, political cooperation between them permissible under certain circumstances, in the interest of common goals or against a common danger. See also József Almásy, "Magyar hivatásrendiség?" (Hungarian corporativism?) *Magyar Szemle*, XLVI (1944): 73.

12. József Almásy, in his series of articles entitled "A magyar katolicizmus útjáról" (About the road of Hungarian Catholicism) which appeared in the Catholic weekly *Jelenkor*, warned against the "optical illusion"which "sees only a difference in degree between traditional Hungarian nationalism and the new totalitarian nationalism."An account of this series of articles by Almásy, including the above quotation, is given in "A katolikus politika feladatai" (The tasks of Catholic politics) *Katolikus Szemle*, LIII (1939): 669.

13. In *Mit akarunk? a Nemzeti Szocialista Földmüves - és Munkáspárt programja* (What do we want? The program of the National Socialist Agrarian and Workers' Party), which appeared in May, 1933, Szálasi's precursor, Zoltán Meskó emphasized that his national socialist party "is based on the religious-moral view of the world and on positive Christianity.... It demands the severe persecution of anti-religious agitation and increased protection for the religious feelings of all Hungarian working people."The program, drawn up in 1934, of another National Socialist Party leader, Count Sándor Festetics, contained a similar point:

We demand that the Christian view of the world be allowed to assert itself in all areas of governmental and social life. We demand denominational peace among the Christian

denominations, as well as respect for the Churches and protection of their rights and prestige.

Finally Ferenc Szálasi, in his program statement published in 1934 and entitled *Cél és követelések* (Our goal and demands), which was adopted by the Hungarian National Socialist Party that was established in the fall of 1937 as a result of the union of the various right radical parties, stated that of the three pillars of the Hungarian Movement the first was the moral pillar, which requires that "true faith in God and true love of Christ may lead alone and exclusively to a true love of nation and fatherland, and conversely also: true love of nation and of fatherland should lead us to a recognition of the true Christ and the true God."In the same place he made the pronouncement that "Hungarian National Socialism is inseparable and indivisible from the teaching of Christ."Going even further, Szálasi in effect claimed for himself an exclusive right to Christianity when he declared that "the weapon for transposing into practice the Jewish moral world order is Communism, while the weapon for transposing into practice the moral world order of Christ is National Socialism."See József Közi-Horváth, "A magyarországi nemzetiszocialista pártok története, programja és jelenlegi állása" (The history, program and present status of the National Socialist Parties in Hungary) *Magyar Kultura*, 49 (1938), lst half year, pp. 48-52, 75-8, 116-7; quotations from pp. 49, 51, and 77. See also Deák's essay in Rogger and Weber, p. 394.

In spite of the above, the investigation conducted by the Vatican in 1938 found the Hungarian National Socialist (Hungarist) ideology to be irreconcilable with the teachings of Christianity. See Macartney, I, p. 228.

14. "Keresztény unió?" (Christian unity?) *Magyar Szemle*, XXIX (1937): 105-15. From the Protestant side János Victor replied with "Keresztyén unió?,"*Magyar Szemle*, XXX (1937): 5-15; to this reply came a further one from Béla Bangha with "Még egyszer: a keresztény unió," (Once more: Christian unity) *Magyar Szemle*, XXXI (1937): 297-308.

15. See Kelemen Király, *Katolikus-protestáns egységtörekvés története Magyarországon* (The history of the efforts to achieve Catholic-Protestant unity in Hungary) (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Standard Press, 1965).

16. Ibid., pp. 76-90; see also, Kónya, p. 92.

17. See "Klerikális tintakulik" (Clerical scribblers) in the editorial column, *Protestáns Szemle*, XLVIII (1939): 102-3.

18. See, for example, the account by József Közi-Horváth in *Katolikus Szemle*, LI (1937): 286-8.

19. Zoltán Nyisztor, *Az actio catholica tíz éve* (Ten years of the Catholic Action) (Budapest, 1943): 29. According to another source, the number of copies reached several million and it was still being distributed, amid the gravest dangers, at the time of the German occupation. J. Vecsey, ed., *Mindszenty Okmánytár* (Mindszenty documents), 3 vols. (Munich, 1957), III: 14.

20. Before the publication of Klemm's book, those persons who read only Hungarian could gain a knowledge of this question from the work, translated into Hungarian by Zoltán Nyisztor, of Michael von Faulhaber, the famous resistance worker and later Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, entitled *Zsidóság, kereszténység, germánság* (Jews, Christians, Germans) (Budapest, 1934).

21. See Béla Bangha, S.J., *Világnézeti válaszok; Korszerű vallási kérdések és ellenvetések [illegible] megvilágítása* (Ideological answers: illuminating contemporary religious problems and contradictions) (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Irodalmi Társaság, 1940), especially pp. 18-32, 79, 87, 101-3, 109-10.

22. See Macartney, I, p. 354; as well as Béla Kovrig, *Magyar társadalompolitika 1920-1945* (Hungarian social politics 1920-1945), mimeographed, 2 vols. (New York: Hungarian National Committee, 1954), II: 174-83.

23. Teleki took his own life on April 3, 1941 because he was not able to prevent the entry into Hungary of German troops marching against Yugoslavia and the consequent turning against Hungary of the Western democracies. By sacrificing his life, he wished to dramatize to the outside world the grave situation in which his country found itself. See Macartney, I, pp. 474-90. For the disbandment at Bárdossy's order of the secretariat of the "national political service"organized by Teleki, see ibid., II, p. 14.

24. See Antal Ullein-Reviczky, *Guerre Allemande Paix Russe*; *Le Drame Hongrois* (Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconniere, 1947): 124-5.

25. Kállay, p. 254.

26. Ibid., p. 267.

27. See Miklós Beresztóczy, "A magyar katolicizmus harca a nemzetiszocializmus ellen" (The struggle of the Hungarian Catholicism against National Socialism) in Antal Meszlényi, ed., *A magyar katolikus egyház és az emberi jogok védelme* (The Hungarian Catholic Church and the defence of human rights) (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1947): 12-13.

28. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

29. Sigismund Mihalovics, *Mindszenty, Ungarn, Europa: Ein Zeugenbericht* (Karlsruhe: Badenia Verlag, 1949), p. 65. Also, József Közi-Horváth, "Mindszenty im öffentlichen Leben, in Josef Vecsey, ed., *Kardinal Mindszenty* (München: Donau Verlag, 1962): 159-60.

30. Edited by József Almásy, and published by Ardói Irodalmi és Könyvkiadó Vállalat, Budapest in 1941.

31. This essay, expanded to more than 500 pages, also appeared as a book: Kálmán Nyéki, *Vallás és faj* (Religion and race) (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1941).

On the Protestant side, the Calvinist theology professor Béla Vasady argued against the Nazi theory of race. See Sándor Bíró et al., *A magyar református egyház története* (The history of the Hungarian Calvinist Church) (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1949): 50ö.

32. Horváth, who taught for a number of years at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and later at the University of Graz, exercised a great influence on Catholic social teaching—primarily in Germany and Austria—especially through his conception of property rights, based on St. Thomas, which he expounded in his work entitled *Eigentumsrecht nach dem hl. Thomas von Aquin* (Graz, 1929).

33. See Note 4 above.

34. The participation of the Church in the anti-Nazi political resistance is treated in my article, "The Catholic Underground in Wartime Hungary: The Birth of the Christian Democratic Party,"*Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, XXIII, no. 1 (March, 1981): 56-69. The way in which it aided the persecuted and saved tens of thousands of lives is described in my paper, "The Role of the Christian Churches in the Rescue of the Budapest Jews,"presented to the Meeting of the Central and East European Studies Association of Canada in Montreal, June 4-5, 1980.