

KÁLLAY AT THE HELM

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Aladár Szegedy-Maszák (1903–1988) was educated at the University of Economics, Budapest, the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques, Paris, and the University of Heidelberg. From 1928 he held several posts as a diplomat. In March 1943 – when he was Assistant Chairman of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry – he went to Stockholm to inform the Western Allies of the Hungarian government. A few months later he became the Head of the same Department and as such played a leading role in the attempts made by Miklós Kállay's government to get the support of the Allies for its anti-German policy. In the summer of 1943 he wrote a memorandum, making propositions about post-war Central Europe and offering them for the consideration of the Western powers. This document was received by the British Foreign Office in August 1943. On 19 March 1944 he was deported to Dachau concentration camp. In 1945 he married Hanna Kornfeld and became Ambassador in Washington. The following year he resigned and settled down in the U. S. Between 1950 and 1969 he worked for the Voice of America. The following text is a chapter from his unpublished memoirs.

By the time of Darányi's fall from power it was already widely known that Béla Imrédy would be his successor. When Imrédy himself was heading towards failure, he saw his most likely successor in Pál Teleki. Under Bárdossy, the choice narrowed down to Miklós Kállay and Miklós Kozma. The Regent trusted them, for they seemed to be immune to the ideological spell of Nazism and their political capabilities were recognized by all concerned. Nor were they encumbered by the kinds of ties in foreign affairs which had automatically excluded Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer from the list of potential prime-ministers in the days of German supremacy. Kozma had originally belonged to the counter-revolutionary faction, but had since broken all ties with the grouping. His quarrel with Béla Marton had, at the time, practically set the seal on this break. By virtue of his background, personality and relationship with Bethlen, Kállay seemed to embody a form of historical continuity. As Kozma's untimely death excluded him from the list, only Kállay remained as the last reserve. All those who entertained doubts about Bárdossy's weakness and tendency to drift, saw a way out in Kállay. Lipót Baranyai would often say what a reassuring and encouraging experience it was to talk to Kállay, to listen to his calm, sober and often aphoristic comments, and to see him looking after his horses on his estate. In other words he saw in Kállay the type of traditional Hungarian political talent which might yet be able to lead Hungary out of the situation it had been forced into by the Second World War. After all, Kállay could identify with nothing but Hungary.

Keresztes-Fischer also warned Kállay to be on the alert, and other supporters of the status quo may well have helped to pave his way to power, or at least tried to make him aware of the great challenge which awaited him.

To a certain extent, Kállay was already something of an anachronism in the Hungary of which destiny had paced him at the helm. Like Bethlen he belonged to the pre-1914 world and had remained completely immune to the spirit of the age, and especially to its Nazi variation. On the whole he saw the entire middle-class as "the gentry" and as the continuation of, or even the substitute for, the historical middle stratum. At first he had considered that the peasantry and the working class would only develop into a significant political force in the distant future; later, however, he saw that they would have to be reckoned with as a political force immediately after the war. He was a Hungarian phenomenon, who, so to speak, totally fulfilled the requirement that Babits had called "nil admirari" — he always retained his political composure and natural detachment whether in Hitler's headquarters or on the eve of March 19th. He had an extremely pertinent sense of "shuttle-cock" politics, the so called "Kállay two-step", and of the Transylvanian political tradition to which, however, he didn't really belong, because he only wanted to shuttle between the Germans and the Anglo-Saxons, and not between the Germans and the Russians. The logical conclusion of pursuing the Transylvanian political tradition would, however, have required the latter compromise as well, for Transylvania had, whenever necessary, formed alliances with all kinds of pagans.

Kállay descended from one of these rare Hungarian families who had kept hold of their original estates and who, almost without exception, had always played a leading political role in their county, the county of Szabolcs. The one exception, perhaps, was Béni Kállay who, after serving in the Austro-Hungarian consulate managed to get as far as the common Ministry of Finance, and as the governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina pursued a policy of tolerant enlightened absolutism. He was an excellent historian and wrote a whole series of books about Serbia and the Serbs. He was one of the truly outstanding Hungarians of the 19th century, an excellent and unchauvinistic representative of the Monarchy's Balkan policy. Apart from that, the family had never played a leading role in national politics, although as part of the noble *bene possessionati* they always belonged to the authentic ruling stratum. In 1931–32, Tibor Kállay, who was Minister of Finance in the post-war period of inflation and financial reorganization, had been a supporter of bourgeois liberalism, but he soon retired from public life. Miklós Kállay had been under-secretary of state for commerce and, as a supporter of Bethlen, had played a fairly significant role in bringing about the downfall of Gyula Károlyi. In Gömbös's government he was Minister of Agriculture, but resigned his post along with Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer at the time of the Gömbös-Bethlen split. Later the Regent — with whom he enjoyed a close personal friendship — appointed him president of the Irrigation Office and a member of the Upper House. He stood well apart from everyday politics but not from public affairs. Politics were in his blood.

Kállay wrote that he had only accepted the premiership after the Regent's repeated efforts at persuasion. This was because he felt his time has not yet come — or rather the time for attempting a policy of distantiation from the Germans. In spite of this, however,

the appointment did not come as a surprise, but rather represented a form of promotion which had been due for at least several months. After all, Bárdossy had very quickly exhausted the somewhat generous measure of faith which had been afforded to a man who had once been one of the most brilliant and promising members of the Hungarian diplomatic corps.

Kállay then submitted a five point programme to the Regent calling for a campaign to "preserve the independence that Hungary still possessed... and to look for the restoration of the independence that had been lost." (Kállay, *Memoirs*, p. 12) The demands of the Germans should be resisted, but occupation avoided. The army should be kept in tact and contacts should be sought and established with the English under the pretext of anti-communism. At first it would be necessary to make pro-German gesture and statements in order to dispel German mistrust and suspicion. Horthy approved of the programme and assured Kállay a considerably free hand. Bárdossy, whom he briefly informed of his plans and to whom he offered the portfolio of Foreign Minister, received him antagonistically. He considered his plans dangerous and said: "You will run after the English and never catch them... There is no changing the fact that if Germany is defeated we too shall finish on the list of defeated enemies. That was decided in the First World War and at Trianon." (Kállay, *Memoirs*, p. 19)* But in spite of feeling deeply offended, Bárdossy acted loyally and did not create any difficulties; indeed he apparently paved Kállay's way in Berlin through Michaelis. He did not, however, accept the post of Foreign Minister, which actually suited Kállay down to the ground. With the exception of Bárdossy, Kállay made no further changes to the cabinet, several members of which Keresztes-Fischer had to persuade to stay on.

Kállay therefore had to cope with the mistrust of the governing party as well as that of the Germans. During their first talks, several leading members informed him that it was mainly out of loyalty to the Regent that they were prepared to support him. And even then, there were certain conditions: he would have, for example, to make concession to "public opinion" on the Jewish question, would have to be prepared to make pro-German statements, and would have to reassure the supporters of Gömbös, who saw him as the enemy of their former leader because in 1935 he had resigned from the government and left the party over the business of dissolving parliament. Above all, Kállay emphasized the issue of independence (of which the right wing politicians who feared Bolshevism and saw security in Germany, had little understanding). He told them that he was willing to make concessions at the expense of the Jews, but only such as did not effect their equal rights and human dignity (labour service, for example, did not satisfy these conditions), and he was not prepared to uncritically adopt foreign formulae. He would exert financial pressure on them by revoking their right to own land – a step which, according to his *Memoirs*, he anyway considered a question of sequence, because, along with Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer he knew perfectly well that the expropriation of estates would be inevitable after the war. (Kállay, *Memoirs*, pp. 67–77) And he was right. When, long before he became premier, his sons were choosing their careers, his chief advice to them was not to contemplate an education in agriculture because, when the time came, they would never be able to run their own estates. Thus Kristóf went into the Hungarian diplo-

*Nicholas Kállay: *Hungarian Premier* (New York, Columbia UP. 1954.)

matic service, András chose a military career, and Miklós went into foreign trade. It is a somewhat curious coincidence that Kristóf went on from the diplomatic service to make a career for himself in the FAO, while András became the manager of an agricultural plant in Germany, and Miklós, after being a prisoner of war in Russia and washing dishes at home, ended up as an interpreter for the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture.

Returning to the matter of the governing party, Kállay realized after his opening talks that he would be unable to speak sincerely before the party in the future – which was already clear from his maiden speech on March 12th. After paying a tribute to Bárdossy, he stressed that to be fit descendants of our ancestors who had accepted European culture, but always through the course of a thousand years remained independent, we should have to “take part in the struggle against Eastern barbarism” and “fight for Christianity and for the fulfilment of our great Hungarian ideals”. He held the Jewish question to be “the most virulent social problem of our day” and made a few unambiguously anti-semitic statements. He spoke of the “restriction of the Jews in the economic field” as a “basic precondition for the economic progress of the Hungarian people”. His speech “did not meet with a particularly warm reception”, Kállay wrote, although he had been forced under all circumstances to camouflage his real intentions: to save Hungary from German occupation. (Kállay, *Memoirs*, pp. 72–77)

It is a strange turn of fate that Kállay delivered his programme-speech to parliament on March 19th. He emphasized that the war we were fighting was our own war and that our participation was in our own best interests. He stressed that the national interest was the top priority, and that it was Hungary’s “historical mission” to serve as the shield of Christianity. The stability of Hungarian foreign policy had to be taken as a given historical, psychological and geopolitical fact. He committed himself to the satisfaction of the nationalities’ demands for equal rights. He sought good relations with his neighbours and did not enter into a polemic with the two Antonescus. He considered the social stratification of Hungary unhealthy, because any attempt to bridge the gap left by the decline of the middle-nobility with the peasantry was prevented by the impermeable stratum of the Jewry, (this was a completely groundless argument and excessive even as an exaggeration). At the same time he avoided all racist points of view. In one of his April speeches, Kállay actually urged the deportation of the Jews – after the war emphasis was not on the act itself, but on its timing. His speech was warmly received by the governing party, but more coldly by the Germans.

The Rumanian response to Kállay’s speech took the form of a fierce attack by Mihai Antonescu. Kállay didn’t answer directly, but sent a message to the Rumanian government via the embassy in Bucharest, saying that they should “take as a basis the assumption that the Transylvanian problem had not been solved either by the Treaty of Trianon or by the Vienna award”. (Kállay, *Memoirs*, p. 84) A solution would only be possible after the war; until then they should try to accept the status quo and treat their respective minorities well. Antonescu refused to accept this position, but proposed cooperation in foreign affairs, the first step towards this being the exchange of information as a precondition of at least a kind of mutual trust between the two governments. This gave the game away somewhat. Kállay pressed for more precise details

about the proposed cooperation, but received no answer. Relations deteriorated still further. In one of his speeches Antonescu demanded that the Rumanian frontier be extended to the river Tisza as his predecessors had done at the time of Trianon. The grievances of the minorities also intensified. The Rumanians regularly sent Hungarians out to the Russian front and always into the front lines. Kállay invited Jagow to visit and told him that the situation was intolerable. He had also received information that "the German authorities in southern Transylvania were ostentatiously supporting the Rumanians and showing an anti-Magyar attitude". He urged that the German government should "instruct the German occupying authorities in Rumania not to show bias and not to abet the Rumanians in their excuses". (Kállay, *Memoirs*, pp. 87–88) The result was a long overdue invitation to Hitler's headquarters. Kállay took me with him, along with Szentmiklós and János Vörös. He dictated his notes for the talks to me. On the way we were also joined by Sztójay.

Kállay was under no illusions about the situation. When a friend congratulated him, saying: "Miklós, now you really are in the saddle", he answered: "Yes, but I have no horse beneath me." Even if the comment was apocryphical, it none the less reflected the truth: he had no genuine power base for the policies he sought to — and actually did — pursue. The state apparatus, the legislature and the establishment in general were, on the whole, behind him, and he also had control over peace-keeping forces at home. All the same, he had no real military power at his disposal. The army could not be used against the Germans for it was impossible to expect it to make a sudden 180 degree turn, as became clear on October 15th. Kállay was well aware of this, which is why tactical means and manoeuvres played such a prominent role in his politics. It was also the reason why he did not have — and perhaps could not have had — any plans with which to cope with the event of a German occupation. He was a prisoner of the basic weakness of the Hungarian state, and try as he might there was little he could do. It was possible *not* to do certain things, but positive action was already beyond contemplation. This weak Hungarian state did at least, however, possess a kind of internal equilibrium which could only be upset from above — or else by means of external interference of the kind represented by March 19th. Kállay preserved this equilibrium along with all its positive virtues, and it was also down to him that Hungary was not bombed, despite the fact that she continued to serve as a vital cog in the German war machine. In spite of Kállay's ultimate failure, this was undoubtedly an enormous achievement. The merciless turn of events led to the fact that his premiership constituted the final chapter in the series of delaying tactics which had been in progress since 1938. He could not, however, come up with a way avoiding catastrophe.

Although Kállay was highly conscious of the national past and of that traditional Hungarian sense of historical mission which brought with it a feeling of superiority over her neighbours, he was still no chauvinist. Chauvinism and intolerance are not shortcomings characteristic of the aristocracy. In any case, social and political democratization do not provide a solution to such intolerance as was illustrated by the example of not only national socialism and Clemenceau's France, but also by that of the Soviet Union and Ceausescu's Rumania. Perhaps the most interesting example, however, is

that of the racial problem in America: the upper and educated strata display an attitude of deeply rooted liberalism, while Middle America is much more rigid in this respect. Most of the real Prussian Junkers stood well above the Nazis – fact born out by the list of persons executed in the murderous July 20th reprisals. In the 19th century, Széchenyi's sense of national identity was far more tolerant than that of Kossuth, and the die-hard conservatives had a far greater understanding of the historical justification of federal and pluralist ideologies than did, for example, Kálmán Tisza. Consequently, Kállay made a concerted effort to reach an agreement with his neighbours, both in his speeches and in the field of diplomacy. But his efforts were neither listened to, nor reciprocated. For Bucharest, Bratislava and Zagreb, it was more important to stay close to Berlin than to Budapest, and the Germans agreed with this logic whole-heartedly. But then, this way of thinking was not entirely alien to the Hungarians either.

Kállay's approach to social issues was basically patriarchal, even though he did take into consideration the great transformations which would follow the war. Right up until the end of the war, he viewed the preservation of the status quo as a political necessity; but whatever is written or said about him, he never for a moment believed that this could be carried over intact into the post-war era. At the same time, however, he still did not consider the peasantry to be a force which could be activated politically in the short term, and always remained a little mistrustful of the masses. You don't know just how right-wing this country really is – he would say whenever we broached the question of needing to appeal to the masses. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that he could conceive of no potential political ally other than the notary and the teacher. In this respect his opinion changed considerably during his emigration and he made many a bitter and aphoristic comment about the "Old Hungary" of which he had been such a prominent representative. My father-in-law once said: "It's not surprising that the Hungarian people have no backbone; after all, we have been doing our best to break it for centuries." In one of his lectures he referred to Werbőczy as a thwarter of progress, adding: "Feudalism was a prison easy to get in to, but impossible to get out of". He would sadly repeat that after 67 not enough had been done to promote the advance of the Hungarian people, and the replenishment and expansion of the middle class with elements from the peasantry. In New York we seldom met; partly because I was always hurrying home after working at "The Voice", and partly because I didn't want to impose on him. It is understandable that his memories began to merge together. Thus, when his Memoirs appeared, he showed them to me, but didn't offer me a dedicated copy, and I didn't ask for one either. We let matters rest at that. This is why, unfortunately, I have very few personal reminiscences dating from that period. Of one thing, however, I am quite certain: he saw everything in a much wider perspective than previously, and continued to struggle with problems of Hungarian history and with the fate of his nation. He had intended his memories first and foremost to serve as a kind of apologia for the Hungarian cause. And it was precisely for this reason that he did not paint a full picture of the more right-wing elements of the governing party, and of the highly objectionable role of some of its ministers. That is why his book is, regrettably, somewhat smaller than his political achievement.

In spite of being a basically calm and balanced man, Kállay was sometimes carried away by his own oratory. The reason for this was that with outspoken radical statements it was sometimes possible to avoid taking radical action (for example in the Jewish question), and it was also possible to dispel the undisguised mistrust with which the right and the Germans received him. The Germans had no doubts about Kállay's personality and political credo. They saw him as representing precisely the type of feudal-liberal Hungarian politician whom they utterly despised. They associated this type with pro-English pipe-dreams and saw therein an obstacle to Nazification. Another reason for Kállay's exaggerations was a certain impassiveness in his approach which tended towards cynicism, and towards an underestimation of the power and significance of words. He viewed politics and oratory or journalism to be two separate and independent categories. He may well have been encouraged in this by Ullein Reviczky, whose temperament was also inclined towards exaggeration. From the very start, however, there were passages in Kállay's speeches which differed radically from the dominant phraseology current in Axis circles at the time, and he expressed his real position on the Jewish question and on the Western powers very clearly indeed. He never inveighed against England or America; he only ever attacked Bolshevism, which was not only in keeping with his convictions, but also served as a useful alibi – rather like, for example, Ceausescu's anti-imperialist invective today.

In the meantime the "state of war" with America – which in December had been considered to be of only theoretical significance, and to which Roosevelt had not even reacted, being then of the opinion that the USA should ignore all such declarations of war from puppet-governments – had become mutual and thus also unequivocal. America now added Hungary to her list of enemy powers. According to Hull, Roosevelt's position had changed because Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria were offering increasing military support to the adversaries of the USA. With this and also the Russians in mind, Roosevelt decided, after several weeks of deliberation, to send an ultimatum (without a dead-line) via Switzerland to Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, according to which the president would recommend the declaration of war to congress unless these governments produced sufficient proof of their intention to stop supplying military aid to the Axis powers.

Before sending the ultimatum, which would irrevocably determine these three nations as enemy states, Atherton, the deputy head of the European Department, wanted, by means of a propaganda campaign, to warn all these nations of the advantages of avoiding a state of war with America. To this end he suggested postponing the already drafted telegram until such a time as the results of the campaign could be established. Finally, he listed among his reasons the fact that, according to his information, Rumania and Bulgaria had lately been displaying a more rigid attitude towards Germany. He also attributed considerable significance to such Hungarian developments as the appointment of the "notoriously anti-German" Kállay, which he took as an indication of the failure of the Germans to select their own second-in-command. This suggested that the Hungarians no longer believed that Germany was in any position to force them into complete submission. What Atherton was not aware of was the balance of power, and he found

little support among his superiors. On March 24th the telegram was sent to Bern, and the Hungarian embassy in Switzerland forwarded it to the Hungarian government on April 7th. The text of the ultimatum emphasized the friendship of the Americans towards the Hungarian people. The Hungarians answered that they were fighting a defensive war against the Soviet Union as a consequence of the bombing of Kassa (Kosice). The Germans disapproved of the fact that the Hungarians had answered at all, because the Rumanians and the Bulgarians had sent no reply.

America's next step came during Molotov's visit to Washington, and was somewhat theatrically arranged. After lunch on May 30th, Roosevelt told Molotov that he couldn't bring himself to declare war on Rumania(!) as this would amount to no more than a waste of strength. That may well be, replied Molotov, but the Romanians are fighting the Russians. Roosevelt then turned to the members of the congress foreign affairs committee who were also present and asked how they would stand on a declaration of war on Rumania. Naturally they said that they would not oppose it, so Roosevelt suggested that they came to a decision on the matter the following week. And so, on June 5th the American declaration of war finally arrived.

The Anglo-Russian treaty of May 26th provided an opportunity for anti-English invective in Hungary, just as the exchange of diplomatic notes between Eden and Masaryk had done with regard to the first Vienna award. This display of "lip service" did not, however, convince the very people for whose benefit it was intended: the Germans. Instead it merely provided further ammunition for anti-Hungarian attitudes in the West which had already been engineered with considerable skill and success. In one sense, this was also the fate of Kállay's speech: those exaggerations which were intended to meet the requirements of Axis phraseology were picked up on in London, while those statements which deviated from the stock phrases of Axis rhetoric were — at least during the first months — noted in Berlin and in the capitals in the neighbouring states. After this even the tone of the press at home obstructed precisely the policies the Prime Minister was trying to pursue. According to Macartney, the language of the press was beneath contempt and even sunk to the level of vulgarity. The American declaration of war was presented as an empty threat, and one article even claimed that the American army could never become a significant factor in Europe. I should add that at least some of these journalists later sought refuge in the American occupied zone, while others, perhaps, tried to discover pro-Soviet sympathies deep inside themselves.

Prior to Kállay's visit to headquarters, Woermann summed up German-Hungarian relations in his records. According to these, the mutual anti-Soviet brotherhood-in-arms and the continued active participation of Hungarian troops (certain units of the 2nd Army had already taken up positions on the eastern front) had already been secured on the basis of statements made by both Bárdossy and Kállay. Hungary's relations with Italy and Bulgaria continued to be cordial. With the three neighbouring states, relations were tense. The signs of an anti-Hungarian bias on the part of these three governments were becoming increasingly apparent (such as the tactful intensification of the efforts of the new petit-entente, Sz-M.). Hungarian-Rumanian relations were typified by the recalling of the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest as a protest against Marshal

Antonescu's speech. Rumania had been putting out wide-ranging anti-Hungarian propaganda — not in the newspapers, which were bound by a press-agreement, but in the speeches of her leaders and through sources in Switzerland, Spain and Portugal (etc.). A few days earlier, the attention of Bossy, the Rumanian ambassador, had been drawn to the condemnable propaganda spread in Germany (but not, apparently, to the equally condemnable propaganda spread in other countries). It seemed that both sides were reserving some military power for a possible quarrel over Transylvania at a later date. There was no hope of arranging direct talks between them. The only remaining alternative was to convince both sides to moderate their respective positions and to use the German-Italian officer committees to eliminate — or at least limit — the grounds for direct clashes. Hungarian-Slovak relations were dominated by Slovak territorial demands and by the demands of the Slovak minorities in Hungary. As regards the Croats, the decisive factor was the absence of a satisfactory solution to disagreement concerning the Mura region. Of the three appendixes, the first concerned the Hungarian-German debate over the cession of villages in the Mura region and the establishment of the river Mura as a frontier, while the second concerned both the interests of the Germans with regard to the modification of the Carpathian border and the imminent German-Hungarian talks. The third appendix concerned the Hungarian-Croatian frontier. This was of a non-committal character and helps to explain why the final settlement was postponed.

In his report, Schnurre drew attention to the fact that the compulsory Hungarian agricultural deliveries would become more important than they had been up until then, because deliveries could no longer be expected from the Yugoslavian, Croatian and Serbian territories and the Rumanian commitment could hardly be increased. The Hungarians appealed to the effects of the flood, but according to German estimates the crop was to be even more favourable than expected. The German clearing debt had risen over the previous year from 50 to 430 million marks, with further increases expected. (It had increased in other countries, too, but there is no suitably comparative data available on this.) Schnurre admitted that this debt would be a burden to the Hungarian domestic economy, but the basic German principle had to be adhered to: as long as the war went on, all participants would have to meet the demands necessary for its continuation, irrespective of the clearing situation. It would be possible to repay the clearing debt quite quickly after the war once peaceful production had been resumed. Finally, he mentioned Hungarian complaints in connection with the Bánság about the estates belonging to the Jewish firm "Ledrer" and about a certain meat factory, but he considered that the status quo should be maintained.

A very characteristic document was Luther's summary of Kállay's April 20th speech about the expropriation of Jewish property, the prohibition of Jewish settlement rights in the provinces, the racial categorization of Jews, Jewish emigration, the exclusion of Jews from gainful employment, and the final solution (without actually mentioning the decisive juncture, which was supposed to come after the war). In contrast to this he listed the aims of the Germans: 1. approval for the extension of deportation measures already in force in Germany to include Hungarian Jews living in Germany (later refused): 2. the

introduction of the yellow star in Hungary (later refused); 3. in spite of this, the eastward deportation of the Hungarian Jews as in the case of Slovakia, Croatia and Rumania; 4. an agreement to the effect that the Germans should have the right to expropriate the property of Hungarian Jews living in Germany and that the Hungarians should have the right to expropriate the property of German Jews living in Hungary. To this one should immediately add that during our visit the Germans did not even mention the Jewish question.

In his Memoirs, Kállay mistakenly records the month of the visit as April. It actually took place on the 7th and 8th of June. According to Kállay, Hitler first asked to be briefed on the situation in Hungary and in particular on Hungarian-Rumanian relations which, he had heard, had become critical. The Prime Minister gave a brief sketch of the internal situation then turned to military matters asking the Germans to keep their promise that the Hungarian forces would not be placed in the firing line, but used to "secure communications between the front line troops and the hinterland, thus safeguarding the German reinforcements". Then he underlined the fact that even if the Germans lost the war "the German people would still remain the largest group in Europe" whereas the Hungarians "might disappear without a trace on the Slav ocean". That was why, to Hungarians, independence was an issue "basic to the continuation of their national existence". In connection with the food supplies sent from Hungary to Germany, Kállay pointed out that even at home they had to contend with the difficulties caused by poor harvest. On the Jewish question he emphasized the quantitative differences between the situation in Germany, where the Jewish population was one percent, and in Hungary, where it was ten percent (a Trianon figure). For this reason the elimination of the Jews from economic life "could only be a gradual process and . . . could under no circumstances be achieved by force" (Kállay, Memoirs, pp. 90-91).

Then he turned to the matter of Antonescu's speech, speech, saying that "Hungary must arm and concentrate all her forces, not to send them against the Russians, but to be ready for the Rumanian attack". He quoted a Rumanian statement, according to which "they had German support for their aggression and had been promised Transylvania as their reward for taking part in the war against Russia" (Kállay, Memoirs, p. 92.).

Hitler listened to all that Kállay had to say without interruption, and neither then nor later made any reference to the Jewish question. After announcing that he would not intervene in Hungary's internal affairs, he turned straight to the Rumanian problem saying "that he did not mind in the least if we settled our differences with Rumania in battle, but he could not have us disturb his plans while the war continued in Russia". He would say exactly the same to the Rumanians. A solution would have to be found so as to prevent the conflict breaking out before the end of the war with Russia, which, incidentally, would be over by autumn. Just as he had warned Teleki and Csáky in the past, he now warned Kállay that the Rumanian soldiers were no longer what they once had been. "They had received German training and German leaders and the Rumanian army had been hardened in fierce fighting. The Hungarian army, on the other hand, had not merely refused German training (to my[ie. Kállay's] knowledge this question had never been raised), but it also had no experience in battle. . . The Rumanians had also

brought countless complaints about Hungarian behaviour. He could not be judge of these matters, but since it was the Rumanians, not the Hungarians, who had asked for the Vienna award, he was prepared to tell the Rumanians to adhere rigidly to the decisions of the award. He was also prepared to instruct all German authorities and officials to preserve the strictest neutrality and to stand aloof from the Hungarian-Rumanian dispute" (Kállay, *Memoirs*, p. 93.0. According to Macartney, Kállay spoke more passionately about the Rumanian issue (which had taken up the greater part of the talks), and assured Hitler that Hungary would remain totally loyal to her war duties. p. 95)

At noon on June 7th Hitler said that Kállay had come with Horthy's two "little requests": that both God and he should benevolently turn a blind eye if the Hungarians began fighting the Rumanians. For the Hungarians it would be a war against Asia, because in Hungarian eyes the border between Europe and Asia is located at the point where the influence of the orthodox church extends no further. Only those countries this side of the border — Kállay had said — had contributed to the cultural development of Europe and all its great achievements like the Renaissance. Then he pointed out that the river Tisza had the same significance for Hungarians as the Rhine had for Germans. He also spoke of the necessity of land reform, which should, however, be restricted to the extension of the smaller estates. He characterized István Horthy as something of a go-getter, whom the Hungarian soldiers fighting on the eastern front saw as a hero. This I can believe, because his father was also an exceptionally brave man. I think Horthy must have planned the whole thing very carefully. After all, if his son had won his spurs in the German army, Germany could hardly object to the fact that the Hungarians allowed him to serve as his father's deputy. Indeed they might even reward him later with the crown of St. Stephen (Hitler's secret conversations pp. 418-19.).

I don't believe Kállay would ever have gone quite that far on the Rumanian issue, but I do consider it possible that he might have hinted at the position held by Teleki and Csáky, and also at the possibility of a test of strength after the war, which Hitler might have understood as an intention.

After the Kállay-Hitler talks, the Führer, in the presence of Keitel, Jodl, Sztójay, Vörös and Homlok went over to the map and described the situation at the front. He also mentioned the summer offensive. During the lunchtime talks Kállay made a note of Hitler's comment that, as long as the war went on, they could not lay hands on the large estates (as Imrédy also must have realized) because they depended on the produce of these for their livelihood. "The Junkers were the best farmers and their sons the best soldiers", Hitler said. But after the war was being borne, both at the front and at home, by the NCO's of the SS. "These must be the backbone of the future German people." (Kállay, *Memoirs*, p. 94.).

The following day Ribbentrop would not allow Kállay to get a word in edgeways, and gave the usual lengthy speech about the international situation. Then he turned to the Rumanian question, producing a whole series of Rumanian papers documenting complaints about Hungarian behaviour. Next he began to speak about the grievances of the German minority in Hungary, complaining that the Hungarian government was not

complying with the Vienna agreement on ethnic groups. He warned the Prime Minister that the key to good German–Hungarian relations lay precisely in the conscientious fulfilment of the terms of this agreement. In reply, Kállay appealed to the great number of Hungarian generals who were of German origin, intending this as a sign of successful assimilation. This had been one of the central arguments of the Volksdeutsch movement against Hungary's nationalities policy, which had also been used to stress the inferiority of the Hungarians (Kállay, *Memoirs*, pp. 95–96.).

The visit had three important consequences. Firstly, Hitler promised to provide some form of mediation between the Hungarians and Rumanians, who had just expropriated the wheat and flour supply of the Hungarians in southern Transylvania. Kállay had not given this information to the newspapers, but after two cabinet meetings lodged a complaint in Rome and Berlin, stating that he would not send the third division of the 2nd Army to the eastern front until the Rumanians stopped persecuting the southern Transylvanian Hungarians. After renewed Hungarian pressure, a combined German–Italian committee began looking into the grievances in June, but only published its findings months later, which, according to Macartney, both the Hungarians and the Rumanians considered biased and inaccurate, but whose proposals they were forced to accept. The Hungarian government sent the promised troops to the front. Relations between the two countries, however, continued to be frosty.

Secondly, at Ribbentrop's request, the government gave its approval to further recruitment for the S.S.

The third consequence was Hitler's lengthy, two-sided discussion with Kállay of the possibility of a post-war Hungarian–Rumanian conflict. After the visit, Szentmiklósy told Jagow something to the effect that Hitler was no longer prepared to provide the Rumanians with guarantees. On July 18th Jagow reported with severe reservations that, according to reliable sources, Kállay had allegedly told his cabinet that after the war Hungary would settle her differences with Rumania in battle. Apparently, Defense Minister Bartha had told him exactly the same thing. The affair caused such a stir in Berlin that on July 18th Ribbentrop ordered Jagow to inform Kállay that he had been surprised to hear of any rumours whatsoever in Hungary concerning Kállay's secret talks with the Führer, "and false rumours at that". The information Jagow had received from Szentmiklósy was in certain respects incorrect. The Führer had not said that, according to Antonescu, a Hungarian–Rumanian conflict would be unavoidable after the end of the war, nor had Kállay said anything of the kind, and nor had the Führer stated that nothing would stand in the way of a Hungarian–Rumanian conflict after the war. What the Führer said was that the Vienna award was to be accepted and adhered to by everyone concerned because it was now necessary to concentrate all energies on the annihilation of the common enemy. If after the end of this war, anyone still felt like starting another war in Europe, that could not be helped. . . Thus Hitler's statement was unequivocally intended to be taken as sign of disinterestedness. On July 23rd Jagow carried out his instructions before Kállay, who listened to the end in a very cordial manner. He was sorry that Berlin was under the impression that the matter was not being treated with due secrecy in Hungary. He had had to brief the Defence Minister on the talks,

and the latter had only mentioned them to Jagow. After that Kállay basically stuck to his position. Consequently, Jagow announced that what he had just told Kállay was to be understood as authoritative and official, and that the Führer wished his talks with Kállay to be interpreted in this matter.

Returning to the epilogue to Kállay's visit to headquarters, on July 11th he spoke with great admiration to the governing party of Hitler's determination, purposiveness and of the ability of the Wehrmacht to carry out any tasks whatsoever. His experiences — he stated — had only strengthened his firm belief in the ultimate German victory. The press, according to Jagow, highlighted these passages.

Jagow wrote two reports about the meeting of the foreign affairs committee. According to one of these, Kállay had emphasized Hungarian—Rumanian relations, while the Germans considered them less dangerous and were not afraid of the complications which might lead to confrontation. The Führer had stated that he would guarantee the Vienna award. They had not requested new troops, only permission to recruit a further 10,000 Volksdeutsch soldiers for the S.S., to which Imrédy had objected in the name of Hungarian sovereignty. At the same time, he stated his whole-hearted agreement in this instance with Kállay's policy of increasing the war effort, but, without naming names, warned the Prime Minister that the majority of high-ranking officers objected to this policy. Kállay assured him that he could not tolerate such attitudes. According to the other confidential report, Kállay had, in connection with the issue of Hungarian—Rumanian relations, asked Hitler to use his influence to counter the impact of Rumanian anti-Hungarian propaganda in Germany and Italy, and to make sure that the German troops should not leave Rumania. Hitler — the report continued — had no intention of disturbing the large estates because he saw these as the only means of providing food for the German people. The right wing opposition received Kállay's pro-German statement with satisfaction while the well-known pro-English and pro-Jewish factions were all the more astounded. In the upper circles, gentlemen's clubs and the upper house of parliament, the right wing opposition spread rumours about wild anti-German and pro-English agitation. Kállay promised retaliation.

I myself noted down the following about our journey to East-Prussia:

I too went to the German headquarters. Szentmiklósy did not want to assist Kállay on his own, so, much to my surprise, took me with him. It was the first time I participated in a "Staatsbesuch" since 1938. Naturally, my first thought was that I had last seen Hitler immediately prior to the action which had brought about the present war: perhaps this visit would mark the beginning of the end of the war. Once again it occurred to me that in the autumn of 1935 Gömbös had been in Berlin. Szákváry had warned us not to forget to congratulate him on the third anniversary of his premiership. Led by Bobrik we assembled in the Adlon and Bobrik muttered a few words in Trieste-Hungarian. Gömbös answered deliberately and confidently that what had happened so far was only the beginning; the really great events were still to come. We walked over to him moved and speechless, and only I whispered to Kamillo: there's still divine providence. A year later Gömbös was dead, and ever since then I have treated my own comments with a little

superstition. Thus I looked forward to the visit fairly optimistically. After all, it did have one advantage — I would see East-Prussia, the only part of Germany I still did not know.

At Bruck we were received by Dornberg, deputy Gauleiter Gerland, Sztójay, Homlok and Mészáros. They lined up on the platform in true military fashion — the war protocol left nothing to the good breeding and manners of the individual. Before our arrival we had already been told that Kállay should alight from the first door of the saloon car, and that we should alight from the last door in order of rank, so we immediately got ourselves in line to the left of Kállay. Ribbentrop's escort stood facing us square on. The order of carriages was always fixed; usually we were given strict instructions as to how we were to line up and assemble. Colonel Pappenheim let out a sign of satisfaction: how good it was that one was always told what to do, and had therefore to think of nothing for oneself. One day it would be worth trying to write a proper description of this Prussian paradise in which, I imagine, the angels are primarily preoccupied with giving orders and the saved with nothing else but obeying them.

We had lunch in the German's large dining car, which was just like that of the Führer. It consisted of one large air-conditioned room, equipped with a built-in radio. At mealtimes — with the exception of breakfast — they always drew the curtains: *Kameradschaftsverdunkelung*, they called it — in order that the poor Germans outside with their rumbling stomachs should not see our luxurious spread. I cannot deny that it was a somewhat unpleasant feeling to sit at breakfast looking out through the window at the staring eyes of hungry soldiers outside. We were very well catered for, except for the fact that we were never once given dessert. The Germans ate enormous quantities of food, and at every possible opportunity. After our arrival at headquarters our special German escort received Ribbentrop's escort in the German dining car: one hour after breakfast they were handing out "Stulleka" as big as your palm. During the evening gathering the talkative general Bodenschatz had six Frankfurters on his plate at the first possible opportunity. This gluttony was highly typical, as was the fact that in the staff dining car of Dornberg's carriage, everything that was served — from the beer onwards — was of worse quality than that served in our carriage.

To enter the territory of the headquarters we had to pass through three military cordons. Guards equipped with mosquito nets raised the barriers set within the barbed wire fence. We were each individually given entrance cards which we did not once have to show, but which we had to return the same evening. The little bunker settlement was situated in a fresh, early-summer forest — here Hitler lived with his closest staff; here he had spent an exceptionally hard winter lasting almost eight months, and from here he continued to conduct the hopeless war. Not far away was Brauchitsch's former headquarters, and a little further on, Ribbentrop kept camp in the deserted castle of a former count between beautiful old oak trees. The Führer's headquarters was chiefly characterized by Prussian simplicity. Hitler lived in two bunker-rooms with low ceilings. The equally low-built "speisebunker" was painted in white, and maps hung on the walls. Opposite the Führer were maps of Asia and Europe. Germany, coloured red, seemed somewhat dwarfed by Russia and Asia. On the wall behind him were archaic wooden portraits of Ullrich v. Hutten and Götz v. Berlichingen, 'echt' representatives of German

history. Another similar woodcut hung on the wall: a knight in armour with a swastika on his shield.

Hitler had put on weight, or rather seemed to have swollen beyond his former size. His movements were still just as sprightly, but he seemed bigger and two very tired eyes looked out from his pale face. Keitel and Ribbentrop had also become heavier, and their eyes too looked tired. On Jodl's face there were red blotches which suggested a nervous disposition. The arms and ears of general Schmundt, the aide-de-camp, and v. Warlimond's almost Hollywoodesque profile were more reassuring. The facial expressions of the others – Mormann, Wolff, Schaub and the head of press, Dietrich, revealed nothing but admiration for the Führer, and the face of Kanneberg, the personal housekeeper, was just as attentive and willing as it had been in 1938, or during his time as a restaurant owner. At the beginning of lunch Dietrich told me that he was interested in horseracing, while ambassador Rintelen, my other neighbour, meditated on how, because of a discrepancy of scales, the maps in front of us still failed to point out how much smaller Europe was than Asia.

Jodl announced in a loud voice that the English had denied using starvation as a means of interrogating German prisoners of war in Africa, and had acted to quash any arbitrary instances of this. Hitler, tucking into an enormous portion of salad, acknowledged this news with considerable satisfaction and ordered that the 6,000 English POWs should also receive food and drink. That's the only way to treat the English, he said, and in his voice one could feel the hatred so well-known from his speeches. One must return blow for blow, that's the only language they understand. Hitler seemed talkative and generally quite calm. His emotions, however, followed their own course of associations and he suddenly turned on Roosevelt, who was just as mad as Wilson had been, and who would soon be taken away to their version of Lipótmező. The American people deserved such a leader; they were worse than the English, and this was the second time they had entrusted their fate to a madman.

Then the discussion meandered over to the occupied Russian territories. It seemed – said Hitler – that Russia had based all her policies on the assumption that everyone is out to deceive everyone else. The Ukrainian peasants had deceived the Jewish commissars, and the Jewish commissars had deceived their superiors. But the peasants had been the shrewdest. Suddenly, after less than six months chickens and animals had appeared as if from nowhere. They even had grain, and everything was 80–100% sown. The food supply for Europe, however, could only be guaranteed for autumn 1943. Ribbentrop nodded: yes, the food problem would only be solved the following autumn. Nobody noticed the contradiction, and Hitler had already moved on to another subject, maybe out of consideration for his Hungarian guest. He emphasized the advantages of the large estates and stressed that he would never revert to a system of small holdings, because it was only possible to experiment with innovations on the large estates. Only the large estates could produce good seed for the poor German soil, and only the large estates could provide the towns and the manufacturing community with food. Town folk could not be led back to the villages, and even the villagers would only stay but if they married peasant girls. He wanted to compensate the section of the demobilized soldiers with land, but only under

the condition that they married peasant girls. Town women would lead even their peasant husbands back to the town.

The lunch drew to a close. We lit up our cigarettes outside, but the Führer had already disappeared. It occurred to me that I didn't know the colour of his eyes; that although this was the third time I had seen him in person, I was no more aware of his extraordinariness, or even of the suggestive spell of his eyes, than I had been in February of 1933, when I listened to his first speech as Chancellor in the Sportpalast.

In the afternoon we went to the Mauer See and went out on the dark blue lake in motorboats. Here and there on the banks the lilacs were already in bloom; in East-Prussia spring had already arrived. The fields were quite dry, gentle slopes, endless fresh green colours. The light, or perhaps the very air had some special character all of its own, and was somehow different from our light and air at home. The people seemed heavy and big-boned; their large pale faces were sharply defined and their eyes set deeply back. In the winter everything had been covered by snow; in the headquarters of the motorized army everyone had had to rely on sledges. We had tea in the Gasthaus where we were given excellent English tea and real coffee. On the side-tables they served tea and coffee substitutes to visiting nurses and soldiers from the same pots.

In the evening only Kállay, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Sztójay and Jagow dined with the Führer. Dietrich Sepp, the commander of the Leibstandarte also arrived. He had been fishing somewhere in the Ukraine. They used to call him Der Fürst von Mariupol und Taganrog, but I didn't dare ask him how he had received this nickname. Perhaps he had killed a particularly great number of Jews in that region, or had fought particularly bravely. Or was it because he had caught a particularly large pike? He was a good-humoured, suntanned and ordinary little man. Everyone tried to please him and would chat with him loudly and jovially. I sat between Bodenschatz and the Führer's doctor, who proudly told me that he had the prettiest little plot in Schwanenwerden; nicer even than the one belonging to Göbbels' doctor, with 300 metres right beside the lake. Unfortunately, however, he could hardly ever go there, as the Führer always wanted him at his side. He mentioned his business interests in Pest, and I immediately hinted at the fact that I knew something of their background. This he found a little embarrassing, but invited me all the more heartily to visit him. At first Bodenschatz had a lot to eat, then started to tease Hewel acting out the Göring-Ribbentrop duo in miniature. They teased one another like schoolboys with adolescent humour and adolescent awkwardness, laughing out loud. Pubertocracy. Bodenschatz said he was sorry about the departure of Dezső László and assured me that to that very day they maintained good contact with him.

Hewel began to talk about his visit to Finland; with genuine admiration he mentioned the fact that 16% of the Finns had taken up arms, (whereas in Germany the figure is only 10%) even though they only had rubbishy aeroplanes to fight with. Even to take off in those planes was to fly in the face of providence. Here I could only agree with him, but then they all started talking about the Führer and that was that. Everyone tried to say something bigger and better about him. They boasted about him, and, through him, about themselves. This is how I learned that the Führer supervised even the seating

arrangements and he was very disappointed if he had to sit anywhere near an ugly woman. He told one of his ministers not to let his wife appear in a certain red dress, and for somebody else's wife even ordered a tailor. After one major reception in Rome, the chief of protocol had called ceremoniously for silence and, stammering profusely, had explained how on the evening of the previous day some women from the large fashion houses had slipped in, for which he most humbly apologized. The Führer had replied: what, those pretty women? It was a pleasure to look at them; I really enjoyed their company.

At half past nine we had to leave to make sure that Kállay and Ribbentrop didn't get back to the train before us and that the evening leave-taking should not happen without the usual business of standing in line. Thus Bodenschatz — who was renowned for being a great talker — did not, unfortunately, have a chance to get on to more interesting subjects. In the evening I took down Kállay's account of his talks with the Führer. The following day belonged to Ribbentrop. We went a few miles by train, then the usual lining up, followed by a walk with an advisor to the embassy, who had been a Landrat and was now the charge of the Staatsbesuche. Politics we mentioned not, apart from the odd comment he accidentally let slip.

Next we went by car to Lehndorff Castle. The road led us down a great avenue of oaks. The building must have last been restored in the 18th century. A rare and pleasing staircase led up to the first floor. Beautiful, but neglected and dilapidated furniture; ornate faiences bearing the family coat-of-arms; antlers and ancestors on the walls. The Lehndorff family had produced bishops as early as the 11th century. Guards wandered around the overgrown park. In front of the house, Gauss, the two Schmidts and Rintelen together with our delegation. The interpreter Schmidt explained everything with supercilious calm. He had still lost nothing of his interpreter's impersonality and disinterestedness, even though he had become the head of the Ministerbüro. He did not wear the party emblem, liked to bathe in the waggon and his greatest desire was to bomb the passengers of the Berlin municipal railway with soapy sponges. He made jokes about the longer working hours and told stories about his winter sledging escapades — he was not interested in our "business"; he was only the interpreter.

Kállay's talks with Ribbentrop went on for a long time and we arrived to the table late. I sat between Rintelen and the other Schmidt, the one from the press. Ribbentrop presided over the meal with stiff formality, but was more talkative and friendly than he had been in Budapest. Just for a change he singled out England for criticism, and Sir Robert Vansittard in particular, upon whom he poured out his scorn. England, of course, had already lost the war at the time of the Washington conference when she recognized America's naval parity and conceded the 5:3 ratio to Japan. After all, she could have known that Japan would not adhere to that. (As if the signing of the contract in itself would have made it possible for Japan to build more ships.) Still more decisive than this, however, was the demobilization of MacDonald. The English politicians had lost all their enthusiasm for "empire-making". Baldwin and Chamberlain were typical upright Englishmen, but Churchill was an adventurer, who in 1923 had paid £100 for the publication of a newspaper article intended to upset the repayment of debts between

allies. What had become of the likes of Clive and Hastings? Today's politicians hadn't the slightest idea about foreign affairs and Sir Robert could lead them wherever he so desired. The right person could have made good use of Sir Robert, but instead Sir Robert used the prime minister to further his own shady aims. He wasn't even an Englishman. He was of Dutch descent, and, to be sure, had Jewish blood in him as well. Otherwise he would never have been so biased against Germany. Lord Rothermere, one of the last great politicians of the Empire, could never make any headway. He repeatedly told the English that the empire would only be saved by means of an Anglo-German alliance. In 1935 he did at least manage in principle to arrange a meeting between Baldwin and Hitler and the Führer was all set to leave for chequers when "Van" intervened and the plan was thwarted. Even in 1936 he made another serious attempt when he invited Sir Robert to the Olympics and discussed the matter with him in detail. The latter accepted all Rothermere's premises, but his narrow-mindedness and stubbornness prevented him from being able to accept the obvious conclusion: an Anglo-German alliance.

And that was that as far as England was concerned. Even Göring contributed a few thrusts of the foil. Then he began to enquire quite earnestly about the causal relationship between the use of paprika in Hungarian cuisine and kidney disease. Kállay reassured him by saying: "Karlsbad hat davon gelebt, dass wir Nierenkrank waren." The subject shifted from Hungary to hunting, and Ribbentrop complained sadly that during the partition of Poland he had fought to the last ditch with Stalin in order to secure the Sувалки forest, and with it the excellent hunting ground that he had always yearned for. It was only with great difficulty that he had succeeded in achieving his goal, and he was merrily preparing for the great hunt when it turned out that there was no game in Sувалки whatsoever. This came as a great disappointment. There was hardly any game around headquarters either.

Kállay consoled him by saying that there were still very fine deer in Máramaros and by inviting him to come and hunt in Hungary. Ribbentrop said he would be only too pleased to come, and would also love to see Bábolna, but this would be impossible before the end of the war. His voice was serious and dignified. "Then come incognito; put on a large pair of dark glasses and a long dark false beard" — urged Kállay with a mischievous smile, indicating with his hands how long the beard would have to be in order to disguise his historical profile. He shouldn't even go anywhere near the government offices. As government representatives we should naturally regret this, but as Hungarians we should be overjoyed if he had a good time. Ribbentrop did not know what to say, and it was only his adjutant who managed to bridge the awkward gap between Ribbentrop's dignified seriousness and Kállay's "false beard" and cordial invitation, by whispering that our special train was more than two hours behind schedule. At this Ribbentrop stood up.

After the customary lining up and leave-taking Kállay gave a long and hearty wave from the train window previously designated by Dornberg. The visit had come to an end. The former Lord Lieutenant of Szabolcs county was not for a moment any the more deeply impressed than he might have once been upon seeing the Lord Lieutenant of Pest county. Pest county is at least twice as big as Szabolcs and the largest and most important county in the land, but Szabolcs is somehow finer, and it is only in Szabolcs that one finds Kállays. With the exception of Kánya and Teleki no Hungarian statesman had ever

visited Adolf Hitler with such composure and self-confidence. Kállay was not touched by the breeze of world history and was not taken in by the personal aura of one of the most significant men of our time. He did not say a word about his personal impressions, nor made a single personal comment about the whole visit and all that was discussed there. He did, however, speak with a certain stress about how Hitler had indicated his awareness of the fact that Rumania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia could not be seen as consolidated states because they were not constituted by state-forming peoples. Hungary, on the other hand, was a consolidated state because of the Hungarian nation and because it had a natural ruling stratum in the ancient Hungarian nobility. One could see that Kállay was pleased to hear this — even from Hitler.

It was Sztójay who expressed unshakable optimism in the German victory. He didn't get on too well with Kállay; he could never manage to hold a two-sided conversation. Sztójay would just talk and talk, while Kállay drew on his long cigar, looking out of the window, nodding from time to time, or occasionally commenting that the rye was pretty good or that the potatoes were overgrown with weeds. Bárdossy would not have put up with Sztójay for ten minutes and would have attempted to convince him of what an ass he was. But that would have led to a discussion giving Sztójay just what he wanted. Kállay did not want to talk about politics; or rather he was satisfied to listen to Sztójay's report on current events. Homlok was decidedly sceptical. He would not interrupt Sztójay, but listened with an expression of condescension on his face. In private, however, he would say that he did not find the German situation particularly promising and that there were still serious problems as regards oil and provisions. Even since the war of words that had taken place in Berlin in the spring, when Homlok had campaigned for intervention in the war against Russia, I had not spoken to him, and nor did I take this present opportunity to do so. He had, however, heard some of my comments about Sztójay and when we parted he mysteriously recommended that I should hold the front at home.

I was particularly fond of General János Vörös at this time (although not for very long) because he spoke in dialect. This rare virtue has to be appreciated even if one does not otherwise agree with the person in question. He had a warm round face, friendly and unpretentious, but then he was a general in the army and thus believed unconditionally in the ultimate victory of the Germans. When it was mentioned that General Matzki, who kept the German records, calculated upon another 300 Russian divisions, Vörös saw this as excessively pessimistic and for his own part was only prepared to reckon on at most 220–240 divisions. He did, however, agree with the Germans that the Russians' equipment was still very good, but argued that their men were poorly trained making German superiority quite obvious. On the basis of data concerning the number of soldiers killed in battle, Kállay came to the conclusion that the Germans could at present only hope to occupy the oil wells to the north of the Caucasus, but Vörös was convinced that they would get much further. The great offensive was a taboo subject during the talk. Only certain detailed parts of it were mentioned, and when Vörös asked Pappenheim if they could make a joint record of what they had heard about military plans, including the great offensive, Pappenheim flushed with anger and reminded him in no uncertain terms

that they only spoke about the great offensive among themselves and not at the headquarters, a position which Vörös immediately endorsed. (1986: since then my opinion of Vörös has changed.) Szentmiklósy felt that the atmosphere was nowhere near as optimistic as it had been during the September visit. I, of course, had no means of comparing the two occasions, and had no long-standing acquaintance with any of those present. On the basis of the talks, however, I was able to draw the conclusion that their judgement had changed considerably. Seven or eight months earlier, one was always hearing: "Der Krieg ist natürlich bereits gewonnen." Now people were more inclined to say, in the most natural of voices, but still using a set phrase: "Der Krieg muss erst natürlich gewonnen werden." Perhaps they didn't actually doubt that the war would be won, for if they entertained any such doubts, everything would collapse around them. The war had to be won, because it was impossible for them to lose. In this way their optimism was toned down into the form of a hypothesis. This hypothetical optimism was rather like the logical foundation of a scientific theory: upon it a whole edifice was built out of a sense of duty, obedience, oath and loyalty to Germany. All it seemed to lack was faith and enthusiasm, which seemed to have been erased by a year of bloody fighting and the repeated postponement of the final victory. After a lot of Kirsch, someone explained to me that in the autumn, once the Russians had been defeated (for it was impossible that they should not be defeated), perhaps even England would realize that there was no sense in going on fighting, and then India, which the Japanese would not be able to occupy, would serve as a grand and even willing form of compensation . . .

Naturally the Russian theme came up again and again and it was clear that it preoccupied them continually. Russia's amazing resistance and industrial preparedness represented a major source of disappointment. After all, the Germans had been convinced that only they knew how to achieve great results with such means. Once again one of their illusions of monopoly had been shattered. But they were also shocked by the fanaticism, suicidal bravery and blind obedience that the Russian regime was capable of inspiring in its people. Trembling, they would tell of how the Russians had initially parachuted their partisans into action, then, finding this tactic too costly on parachutes, had resorted to dropping their partisans without them, working on the basis that out of every ten or fifteen, at least one or two would reach the ground in one piece. The rest would perish, but these would only be conscientiously and stubbornly carrying out orders. The Russians had changed completely since 1918, someone said. Until then they had been a benevolent and peaceful people; now they were capable of enormous ferocity. In vain did they say that the commissars were the real scoundrels, while the Russian people were merely obedient: they too were scoundrels precisely because they were so obedient. . . For his part, Gerland, the deputy Gauleiter, explained that the reason why there would be no repeat of 1918 was that the people now were obedient, and those who rebelled would be executed with their families. . . Ribbentrop's doctor, with whom I had already had a somewhat heretical discussion in Budapest, also spoke about the Russians, and once said in a very disillusioned voice: "Mit einem Volk kann man Alles machen, aber auch Alles. Man braucht nur eine Gestapo dazu, das blosse Dasein dieser Einrichtung garantiert, dass Alles den gewünschten Weg nehmen wird". I quietly asked him if it

wasn't possible to force a people to do good as well as bad, but he gave no answer. I tried to tone the question down a little: I am always amazed that it is possible to force people to achieve positive results. To this he answered: Nothing could be more simple; if they don't work they get nothing to eat; after going hungry for three days you can be sure they'll turn up for work. In this way the Russian example is both terrifying and inspiring for you can make a people do anything.

Much less was said about the Italians. They didn't only look down on them, but were extremely angry about the fact that of the seventy Italian divisions, no more than twenty were profitably positioned from the point of view of the Axis powers, while the rest were inactive. "Wir haben in Lybien einen Dreck zu suchen", said one of our fellow passengers with all the forthrightness of Gustav Siegfried I. Where would the Italians be without us, he went on. The English would be in Brennen, Szentmiklós assured him. Then they began to curse the Italians vehemently for having sold their arms and tanks to the Chetniks. The general atmosphere of the visit was positively cordial, especially after the Kállay-Hitler talks. Up until then I had been aware of a certain sense of suspicion. I think they had expected us to try to reduce our military commitment to the Russian war because of the Rumanian threat. At first, all our complaints and reservations were met with the same stereotyped response — that there would be not repeat of 1916, that in no event would the Rumanians attack us. Later they suddenly became more understanding and were more generous with their halfpromises. This would, of course, mean little in practice, but Hitler was very friendly towards Kállay, took no interest in the Jewish question and — in the words of the Austrian social democrat Rudolf Fischer — made a concerted effort to say things which would evoke a feeling of sympathy in the Hungarian visitors. He also stated that King Carol II had asked him to arbitrate on three occasions. This was something of a novelty, and a significant one at that. Although it would, of course, have been good to have seen a copy of the letters. Hitler also admitted that we would at that time have defeated Rumania. The second Vienna award was therefore just as striking an example of German friendship as the first had been: it had been carried out in the interests of the other party.

All in all I neither saw nor experienced anything which made me modify the opinions I had held up until then.

June 23rd 1942

At the end of June, Hammerstein Kunrat sent a message with his son saying that he had no faith in the success of the great summer offensive, and that he did not believe that the Russian resistance would be broken. Kunrat spent four hours in Budapest on the way back from his military dispatch mission to Turkey. We met between trains, and together with Kálmán Hardy drove around Budapest. Kunrat told us indignantly about the scandals surrounding the diplomatic pouch. He wrote at great length about his Turkish experiences in his book *Spähtrupp*.