

INTRODUCTION

The fate of Hungary's Jewish population was closely connected to the country's involvement in World War I and its subsequent experience of postwar settlements and events. Hungary was hardly extraordinary in this regard, but in 1944, more than other countries, its leaders turned dramatically against its Jewish citizens even as Nazi Germany's fortunes became bleak during the final year of the war. The roots of the decision to deport the Jews of Hungary to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination center in 1944 are the subject of this essay, as well as the primary role that the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie played in their deportation.

Interwar Hungary

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapsed in 1918, in step with the collapse of German armies on the Western Front. In October–November 1918, during the so-called Aster Revolution, led by Count Mihály Károlyi,¹ Hungary seceded from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and dethroned the last Habsburg emperor, Karl IV, by proclamation of the Hungarian People's Republic. Károlyi, under pressure from US president Woodrow Wilson,² and in the hopes of a better outcome at the peace negotiations with the Entente,³ disarmed the Hungarian army. In March 1919, amid the ensuing political and social upheaval and the occupation of over three-quarters of the country by Czech, Romanian, and Franco-Serbian troops, a Communist coup ousted Károlyi. The coup was led by Béla Kun, who had become a Communist while a prisoner of war in Russia. Kun established the Socialist Federative Republic of Councils in Hungary, also known as the Hungarian Soviet Republic, following parallel events in Bolshevik Russia. He was in constant communication with Lenin and shared the Bolshevik leader's vision for world revolution. Kun and the core of the leadership of the Republic of Councils were trained in Bolshevik Russia and upon returning to Hungary were joined by Social Democrats and leftist intellectuals. During this brief revolutionary period, Kun and his followers represented especially the interests of the masses of World War I veterans and the urban proletariat. Kun and most of the leaders were Jewish, which would prove paramount in identifying Jews with Bolshevism, and a cardinal point of anti-Jewish sentiment (and policy) in interwar Hungary.⁴ The “red terror”—the nationalization of private property enforced by arbitrary measures, including the execution of enemies real and assumed—and the unsuccessful attempt at repelling the Romanian army led to the fall of the Hungarian Soviet experiment after 133 days.

Gendarmes, Bureaucrats, and Jews

A Documentary History of the Destruction of Hungary's Jews, Spring-Summer 1944

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A counterrevolutionary government had already been formed in the southern Hungarian town of Szeged in the summer of 1919, with the consent of the local French occupying authorities. The traditional elite of the Austro-Hungarian period—the Hungarian aristocracy, the bureaucracy, and army officers, the latter two largely of gentry background—supported the counterrevolutionary government. The counterrevolutionary government organized a national army under the leadership of an Austro-Hungarian navy commander and World War I hero, Vice Admiral Miklós Horthy, whose position was bolstered by name recognition and popularity.⁵ Gradually, the national army became the strongest military force in the country and Horthy gained the support of the Entente’s representative in Hungary, George Clerk,⁶ who saw in him the potential for stabilizing the country. The national army, consisting of nationalist, anti-Communist, and anti-Jewish officers, deployed in detachments from Szeged through western Hungary and pushed toward Budapest, executing, torturing, and imprisoning participants, supporters, and sympathizers of the revolutions whom they encountered. This “white terror” lasted more than a year. In November 1919, after the Entente finally managed to get the Romanian army withdrawn from Budapest, Horthy marched into the capital with the goal of assuming authority and purging the city of revolutionaries. The restoration of conservative power began. In March 1920, while Horthy’s army surrounded the Parliament building, the National Assembly abolished the republic and restored constitutional monarchy. Instead of resolving the dynastic problem, the National Assembly elected Horthy as regent. His election occurred on the consensus reached by the parties of the National Assembly.⁷

Horthy’s powers were much like those of a monarch, albeit with some limitations. His power was not derived from God. Much like royalty, however, he was criminally inviolable. He was not entitled to grant noble titles or exercise patronage over the Roman Catholic Church, but he appointed and dismissed prime ministers, government ministers, chief law enforcement and administrative officials, and judges. It was also in his power to convene and dissolve parliament. In legislative matters he had veto power to postpone the enactment of laws. He was the commander of the armed forces—supreme war lord—but the declaration of war or signing of peace agreements required the prior consent of the Parliament.⁸ His full title was “His Serene Highness the Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary,” and his powers gradually grew to his title.

The regime that Horthy established never lost its counterrevolutionary character; it was a conservative right-wing regime with autocratic tendencies and with limited franchise, one which nevertheless preserved a parliamentary system. Elections and parliamentary rules assured the dominance of the traditional elite that had propelled Horthy to power. This elite formed the Unity Party (*Egységes Párt*), which governed in the 1920s and was in a power-sharing position until October 1944. The primarily Jewish industrial and financial capitalist elite, many in the aristocracy, supported the Horthy regime and provided its economic and financial foundation.⁹

The military detachments of the “white terror” were abolished for the sake of stabilization, but their radical right-wing racist organizations continued to exist under

the consolidated regime.¹⁰ Their tentacles extended into all areas of Hungarian society. Their leading figures were members of Parliament. One of them, Gyula Gömbös, became prime minister in 1932. The regime followed a Christian nationalist policy rooted in faith, nationalism, and racial prejudice, especially against Jews. Horthy considered Hungary a bulwark against Bolshevism. Socialist and liberal traditions and ideas were rejected as foreign and dangerous. From the beginning, the regime had a strong antisemitic undercurrent that rose to the fore after the revolutions and early in the Horthy regime but remained in the background in the 1920s. Yet by the late 1930s, antisemitism became increasingly prevalent and open.

The Horthy regime was an old-fashioned right-wing regime, rather than a modern post–World War I political phenomenon. Unlike the fascist movements of the same era, it emerged from establishment and upper-class elements and lacked a populist character. The Horthy regime was bound by tradition in its discourse, symbolisms, and social conduct. It banned the Communist Party outright and kept the home-grown national socialist party, the Arrow Cross Party under Ferenc Szálasi, and other extreme right-wing parties in check by occasionally banning them and keeping them under constant surveillance. In the cities, the police controlled the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions and suppressed any movements on the left. The rural population was under the thumb of the gendarmerie, which kept watch for any suspicious activity on the part of rural laborers. With slight modifications, the Horthy regime adhered to its fundamental tenets and political structure throughout the interwar period, although a shift in the political elite and priorities occurred in the first half of the 1930s under Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös, who nudged the regime closer to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

The Horthy regime's ideology, as well as its domestic and foreign policy, was shaped by the Treaty of Trianon. The treaty was part of the postwar Paris peace agreements, the series of treaties that officially ended World War I, consolidated the victory of the Entente powers, and reconfigured the former imperial lands according to Woodrow Wilson's draconian and ill-conceived principles of self-determination.¹¹ After half a year of negotiations, Hungary signed the peace treaty on 4 June 1920 at Chateau Trianon.

In addition to satisfying Wilson's insistence on self-determination across postwar Europe, Hungary's new borders reflected France's interest in forming a territorial block, a cordon sanitaire of newly established states built on the ruins of the Habsburg Monarchy, aligned against future German revanchism and emerging Soviet power. Among the states benefiting from redrawn Hungarian frontiers, Romania was the most reliable pillar for France.¹² With regard to the defeated states, the Entente disregarded historical, ethnic, topographic, and economic factors when it drew the borders, reducing Hungary to a rump state. Hungary lost almost two-thirds of its historic territory, as well as one-third of its ethnic Hungarian population (that is, three-fifths of its total population).¹³

The Trianon Treaty also caused significant losses of natural resources in the form of arable land and farm animals, most of Hungary's iron ore and other industrial metal

ores, a significant amount of its coal reserves, and most of its minerals. The country's infrastructure, most notably the railroad networks connecting the distant regions of the former Habsburg Empire, was fragmented and disrupted. Industrial plants and commercial enterprises were also left behind in the new states. Because the banking sector was centralized before 1920, its losses were less severe than those in other sectors of the economy. The treaty capped the armed forces at 35,000, not including law enforcement personnel, notably the 12,000 police as well as 12,000 gendarmes.¹⁴ In the last phase of World War I and immediately after signing the Trianon Treaty, large numbers of Hungarians from the successor states fled to Hungary. The number of refugees climbed to around 400,000 by 1921.¹⁵

Revising the Trianon borders became Hungary's primary foreign policy goal and enjoyed strong public support. For the generations that had grown up in historic Hungary, the Trianon Treaty was unacceptable, severing economic and cultural ties as well as separating many families. Revisionism became the ideology of the Horthy regime, indoctrinating the generations that grew up after Trianon. Rump Hungary's map was an inescapable sight in schools and the public sphere. Irredentist slogans and songs, and an irredentist national creed, were part of the daily diet in every aspect of public life: "No, no, never" [to acceptance of the Trianon settlement] was a rallying cry, as was the rhyming (in Hungarian) slogan: "Rump Hungary is not a country, greater Hungary is paradise!" And the first verse of the national creed was either sung or spoken: "I believe in one God, I believe in one homeland, I believe in the Almighty's eternal justice, I believe in the resurrection of Hungary." The conditions that the Trianon Treaty had created, and the resulting experience of national humiliation, mobilized the ruling elite and the public to a determined program of territorial revisionism, which became an axiom of Hungarian foreign policy from 1920 until the very end of World War II.¹⁶

Revisionism tied the hands of Hungary's leaders even more than their anti-Bolshevism. Indeed, it was the determination to revise the Trianon Treaty borders that drove Hungary into the German-Italian alliance in the 1930s, the first challenge to the status quo since World War I. After signing bilateral agreements with Germany and Italy, Hungary joined the Anti-Comintern Pact (February 1939) and the Tripartite Pact (November 1940), which formed the cornerstones of the German-led alliance system, the Axis.¹⁷ Other Axis countries, however, had similar motivations, but contrary to Hungarian interests. The great weakness of the German alliance system was that several of its member countries—Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, and Romania—were sworn enemies. Each was determined to regain territory, or to protect its own territorial integrity and ethnic minorities at the others' expense, and each hoped to achieve its aims with German political support and German military power, which seemed unchallenged until 1942.

The Hungarian political leadership, staking everything on this card, successfully recovered most of the territories lost at Trianon. In November 1938, Hungary regained the Felvidék (Upper Region)—a strip of land in southern Slovakia and west-

ern Ukraine. Then, in March 1939, when Germany occupied the Czech lands and Slovakia became an “independent” fascist republic, Hungary was able to reoccupy the entire Kárpátalja (Carpatho-Ruthenia), which had been lost to Czechoslovakia. In September 1940, Hungarian troops marched into Észak-Erdély (northern Transylvania), the region that Hungary was most eager to regain. That prize was awarded to Hungary by German-Italian arbitration, at the expense of Romania. In April 1941, after Germany’s successful attack on the Yugoslav kingdom, Hungary recovered the Délvidék (Southern Region, a part of northern Serbia). By 1941 Hungary had satisfied most of its territorial demands with the exception of southern Transylvania.

While these old-new borders reunited ethnic Hungarians, they also introduced large non-Hungarian populations into the body politic. Among the more than four million people who inhabited the recovered regions were more than one million Romanians living in northern Transylvania. The recovery of its lost territories thus sharpened the hatred and suspicion that defined Hungary’s relationship with its neighbors. Only Nazi Germany’s power was able to keep these sentiments from boiling over—through constant threats, as well as playing one country off against the other.

Antisemitism was foundational to the ideology of the Horthy regime. Jews became the scapegoats for Hungary’s post-Trianon trauma. Jews, especially active in reformist and radical liberation movements of the early twentieth century, and thus prominent among government leaders in 1918 and 1919, were subsequently blamed for Hungary’s territorial losses—although those losses were unquestionably beyond the control of any Hungarian government or army by November 1918. Post-Trianon Hungary’s Jewish population was just over 470,000, less than half the number in prewar Hungary; however, the proportion of Jews in the country’s population remained the same, at around 6 percent.¹⁸ The social tensions that World War I, the revolutions, and the counterrevolution had created exposed the Jewish population’s social and political vulnerability.

Jews, who for historical reasons held significant parts of Hungary’s critical economic activity in 1914, were accused of profiting from the war as capitalists and, at the same time, of trying to overthrow capitalism with communism in the service of Bolshevik Russia.¹⁹ And in post-Trianon’s ethnically homogenous environment, Jewish people stood out more than before. The overwhelming majority of Jews—over 215,000—lived in Budapest; over 50 percent lived in cities.²⁰ Jews also represented either the majority or a significant portion of people employed in the free professions, which increased their visibility and thus the vulnerability of the Jewish community. As representatives of these professions—doctors, lawyers, engineers, journalists, scientists, writers, artists, and entertainers²¹—Jews were in the public eye.

Anti-Jewish legislation was introduced as early as 1920 with the passage of the Numerus Clausus law, which restricted the proportion of Jews to 6 percent in institutions of higher learning.²² Official antisemitism, however, was contained during the consolidation period of the 1920s under Prime Minister István Bethlen, when Hun-

gary sought foreign loans for the country's economic reconstruction.²³ This changed after Hitler seized power in early 1933. Antisemitism intensified in propaganda and official discourse, especially under Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös, a fervent advocate of the need to protect Hungarians as a "race."²⁴ Subsequent Hungarian governments followed in his footsteps and the shift toward the right and official antisemitism continued. In 1937, there was already parliamentary discussion of anti-Jewish legislation. After the *Anschluss* in 1938 and the territorial gains granted by Hitler, Hungarian governments enacted three anti-Jewish laws in May 1938, May 1939, and August 1941—legislation that progressively reduced the participation of Jews in business, professional, and public life, as well as in higher education.²⁵ These laws signaled Hungary's willingness to follow German policy regarding the Jews. They culminated in a definition of Jewishness based on race rather than on religion, along with a ban on marital and extramarital relations between Jews and Christians.²⁶ The anti-Jewish laws impoverished a large segment of the Jewish population while restricting their rights. Moreover, they conditioned the Hungarian public to blame the Jews for all social and political ills: they justified, and indeed incentivized, expropriation of their livelihoods by making the general population beneficiaries of the redistribution of Jewish property.

The German Occupation

In February 1944, when Hitler approved the occupation of Hungary, it was the rapid advance of the Soviet Red Army from the west bank of the Dnieper River and across western Ukraine that forced Hitler's hand. The Carpathian Mountains formed a horseshoe protecting Hungary's northern and eastern approaches and remained the final natural obstacle between the Red Army and the Hungarian Plain, which led directly into central Europe. It was essential for Hitler and the Wehrmacht to secure Hungary and to protect Germany's major supply routes. The occupation was also triggered by a badly timed request from Horthy, who had asked Hitler to withdraw Hungarian troops from the Eastern Front to defend Hungary's borders from an anticipated Soviet offensive. The request deepened Hitler's suspicions about Hungary's reliability as an ally.³¹

Hitler initially planned a total military takeover of Hungary, using Slovak and Romanian forces. The plan was revised in March 1944 based on the intervention of a group of experts inside the Nazi Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD),³² led by SS *Sturmabführer* (Major) Wilhelm Höttl.³³ The new occupation plan stipulated obtaining the endorsement of Regent Horthy to preserve a semblance of Hungarian independence. In a memorandum (**Document 1**), Höttl forcefully argued that a cooperative government in Budapest, nominated by Horthy, would have important benefits for the Reich: the operation would require fewer German troops; additional Hungarian troops would be available for the front; and Germany would be able to exploit Hungary's resources to the utmost degree, including, most importantly, the sup-

Hungary's Anti-Jewish Laws of 1938–41

Between 1920 and 1942, the Hungarian parliament passed twenty-three laws that affected the lives of Jews. The three described here were the most significant of these laws. Between 1938 and 1944, Hungarian governments also issued 367 anti-Jewish decrees (in addition to a number of confidential decrees).²⁷

Law XV of 1938 restricted the proportion of Jews in professions (physicians, dentists, lawyers, engineers, journalists, and editors, and those in theater and movies) to no more than 20 percent; the same 20 percent restriction applied to financial, commercial, and industrial enterprises having more than ten employees. The law defined a Jew as an individual belonging to the “Israelite religion.”²⁸

Law IV of 1939 forbade state employment of Jews and limited their employment elsewhere to no more than 6–12 percent in enterprises, to one person in businesses employing fewer than five people, and to two persons in businesses employing five to ten people. In the professions as well as in higher education, participation was limited to 6 percent. For buying and selling land, Jews needed special permission. The law also denied Hungarian citizenship to Jews and restricted their voting rights. This law was still based on religious denomination, but the future shift toward racial discrimination was already noticeable: Jews were individuals who belonged to the Israelite religion, or if one of their parents or two of their grandparents belonged to the Israelite religion.²⁹

Law XV of 1941 introduced the race-based definition of Jewishness. This law superseded the definition of Jew in the two previous laws. It encompassed anyone whose two grandparents were born as members of the Israelite religion or who belonged to the Israelite faith regardless of family history. The law forbade marriage and made Jewish men punishable for extramarital relationships with non-Jewish women.³⁰

ply of food, industrial equipment, and energy sources for the war effort, and financing for the occupation itself. Höttl's plan gained the support of Ernst Kaltenbrunner, and eventually of Himmler as well. After Kaltenbrunner and other high-ranking Nazi officials reviewed and edited the memorandum, Walter Hewel, the foreign ministry's senior liaison officer at Hitler's headquarters, presented it to the Führer.³⁴

Hitler accordingly invited Horthy to meet him in Klessheim castle, close to Salzburg. Horthy's delegation included the Hungarian minister of foreign affairs, Jenő Gyicz; the minister of defense, Lajos Csata; the chief of general staff, Colonel-General Ferenc Szombathelyi; and the Hungarian ambassador in Berlin, Döme Sztójay. Hitler blindsided Horthy with the fait accompli of the planned occupation. Szombathelyi urged Horthy to negotiate with Hitler, instead of leaving the meeting.³⁵ During his three meetings with Hitler, Horthy's only accomplishment—not to be underestimated, under the circumstances—was his refusal to sign the prepared written consent to the occupation. At their final meeting, Horthy gave a verbal promise not to resist the German occupation and he agreed to remain in office. He also agreed to appoint a government that Hitler would approve. On 19 March, German troops marched into Hungary without resistance.

Another motive behind Hitler's decision was to prevent Hungary from reaching a peace agreement with the Allied powers, specifically with Great Britain and the United States, against Germany. The Hungarian prime minister, Miklós Kállay,³⁶ had indeed intensified his efforts toward such an agreement with the Allies, especially after US and British forces landed in Italy in July 1943. Kállay hoped for a Balkan invasion that would bring Allied forces into the region. He faced a serious obstacle, however, in trying to reach a compromise with the Allies, as Hungary had participated in the attack on the Soviet Union, the third member of the Allied powers. Many within the Hungarian political elite, including Kállay, were Anglophile, and they struggled with the contradiction of bargaining for peace with Great Britain and the United States while simultaneously fighting the Soviets. This was an unacceptable position for the Allies. All along, however, German intelligence was gathering exact information about Kállay's secret negotiations.³⁷

In Klessheim, Hitler raised “the Jewish question,” or (as it was phrased with increasing frequency from 1941 onward) “the Final Solution” of the Jewish question.³⁸ Although there are no documents regarding how this topic was discussed, the records of the Crown Council of 19 March, convened by Horthy upon his return to Budapest, contain this statement: “Another accusation [by Hitler] was that Hungary does not do anything in the Jewish question and is not willing to finish off the large number of Hungarian Jewry.” Ribbentrop raised this issue in a similar fashion in his meeting with Sztójay.³⁹

The “Final Solution” was the euphemism for the extermination of the Jews. Between 1942 and 1944, “the Jewish question” was the refrain at every meeting between Hitler and Horthy and between Hitler and Hungarian prime minister Kállay, as well as among government officials and ambassadors.

After the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942, Hitler was determined to mobilize his police and army, and force the countries in his orbit—Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, and Hungary—to collaborate in the deportation of their own Jewish populations.⁴⁰ From the introductory visit of Kállay in early June 1942, during Sztójay's discussion with Martin Luther,⁴¹ and Luther's subsequent memorandum to the Hungarian government on 17 October, German demands became increasingly aggressive.⁴² They insisted on the total exclusion of Jews from the economic and cultural sphere, the introduction of the yellow star, and preparation for their deportation to the East. Hitler also made clear to Sztójay that the elimination of the Jews was the goal.⁴³ During these encounters, and in a lengthy memorandum on 2 December 1942, the Hungarian side resisted these demands, emphasizing that the anti-Jewish measures in Hungary had diminished the participation of the Jews in Hungarian economic and public life, but that complete exclusion would cause economic disruption detrimental to Hungary's economic obligations toward Germany. Kállay indicated that Hungary, as a sovereign nation, would solve the Jewish problem after the war but had no legal or technical means to expel the Jews from the country in wartime.⁴⁴ The most explicit demand for deporting and killing the Hungarian Jews was expressed at Hitler's and Ribbentrop's meetings with Horthy on 16–17 April 1943. Responding to Horthy's question of what he, Horthy, was supposed to do with the Jews who were already deprived of their livelihood, Ribbentrop replied that they either had to be destroyed or sent to concentration camps. Hitler referred to Poland as an example where Jews who refused to work were shot, and Jews who could not work, died.⁴⁵ The last warning before the occupation came from Ribbentrop in his meeting with Sztójay on 19 December 1943, after Veessenmayer's second visit in Budapest. In Veessenmayer's assessment, the Jews were "enemy number one," "saboteurs" whose influence and presence in Hungary could not be tolerated any longer.⁴⁶

For Hitler, Hungarian officials' attitudes and actions toward the Jews was the "ultimate test of loyalty."⁴⁷ Yet Horthy and Kállay consistently rejected a radical solution of "the Jewish question."

Hitler was outraged by the fact that Europe's one remaining large Jewish community resided within the territory of Germany's ally and was still more or less intact. After the reincorporation of territories lost in the Trianon Treaty, the Jewish population, according to the 1941 census, increased to 725,000. The same census recorded about 62,000 converted Jews.⁴⁸ About 146,000 Jews lived in the territory acquired from Czechoslovakia; 68,000 in the Upper Region and 78,000 in Carpatho-Ruthenia; 164,000 in northern Transylvania; and 14,000 in the Southern Region. This constituted 4.9 percent of the total population and a decline of one percent compared to the post-World War I Jewish population. The Jewish population suffered major losses in 1941. About 18,000 so-called alien Jews, most from Carpatho-Ruthenia, were deported to Kamenets-Podolsk (or Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyj, in Ukraine), and most of them were killed.⁴⁹ In 1942, some 700–800 Jews were killed in Újvidék in

Hungarian-occupied Serbia, and elsewhere in the Southern Region;⁵⁰ about 25,000–42,000 Jewish forced laborers had also perished on the Eastern Front supporting military operations. Even after these losses, the Jewish population in Hungary remained around 760,000 on the eve of the German occupation.⁵¹

There were, however, significant differences between the Jewish population of post-Trianon Hungary and those living in the reincorporated territories of Carpatho-Ruthenia, the Upper Regions, and northern Transylvania. Despite the economic and social shocks following World War I, the depression, and anti-Jewish legislation, Jews were highly assimilated. Assimilation went hand in hand with conservative and patriotic attitudes and trust in the Horthy regime, which were reinforced by the fact that they had escaped ghettoization and deportation until the German occupation. Most of the Jewish population belonged to the Neolog Jewish community with 65.5 percent, while only 29.2 percent was Orthodox. The Neolog community was especially strong in Budapest.⁵² In post-Trianon Hungary, most Jews were employed in industry and commerce and most lived in cities.

In the reincorporated territories, particularly Carpatho-Ruthenia and northern Transylvania, there was strong resistance to assimilation. The majority of Jews belonged to Hasidic communities that originated in Habsburg Galicia. They closely observed traditional forms in their religious practices, clothing, and eating habits.⁵³ Most spoke Yiddish, although a significant number also spoke Hungarian because the older generations were educated in Hungarian-language schools. A larger portion of the population, around a quarter, was employed in agriculture than in post-Trianon Hungary, and was generally less prosperous than in the core lands. These distinctions between Jewish populations and communities in the core and the periphery had far-reaching consequences during the German occupation.

The Occupiers and the Occupied

The occupation was first and foremost a military undertaking. The region east of the Tisza River (including Carpatho-Ruthenia) became a military operational zone, where most German troops deployed.⁵⁴ Hitler demanded that Hungary provide two infantry divisions and one armored infantry division, as well as two mountain infantry battalions for the front. The German military leadership determined their deployment; German liaison officers were appointed to control and advise Hungarian commanders. The few high-ranking Hungarian officers who were not completely pro-German were replaced. Hitler's demands included raising the labor capacity and output of Hungarian war production—mainly war matériel and oil—as well as increasing the quantity of agricultural exports to the Reich. In addition, Hungary's financial resources were put at the disposal of the common war effort.⁵⁵ To this end, the regent had to appoint a new government that would “work in the closest cooperation with the government of the Reich.”⁵⁶

In his memorandum urging a collaborative occupation rather than a military takeover, Höttl provided a list of Hungarian politicians who could form a cooperative government. The list consisted mainly of the leaders of right-wing and national socialist political parties or factions, with whom Höttl had cultivated contacts over several years. **(Document 1)** The German foreign ministry agreed with the intelligence agencies' analysis regarding the occupation, but they disagreed with the RSHA about how to govern Hungary, and with whom. Hitler appointed Edmund Veesenmayer as both "plenipotentiary of the Great German Reich in Hungary" and ambassador of the German foreign ministry.⁵⁷ In these roles he had responsibility for the "overall political development in Hungary." **(Document 37)** Veesenmayer's task was to oversee all German civilian offices and organizations, reporting directly to Ribbentrop, the foreign minister of the Reich. He had previously served as a troubleshooter, usually reporting to the foreign ministry; he was sent as special representative (*Sonderbeauftragter*) to every country that Germany planned to occupy or where occupation problems needed to be resolved.⁵⁸

In this capacity, Veesenmayer traveled to Hungary in April and again in November 1943 to assess the political and economic conditions of the country as Germany's ally. He evaluated its leading political figures, parties, and opposition, as well as the role of the Jews in all spheres of Hungarian life. Veesenmayer's negative assessment anticipated a German occupation and outlined its shape.⁵⁹ His memorandum of December 1943 was most likely the basis for Höttl's argument against forcible occupation: Veesenmayer advocated an intervention that would keep Horthy in office. Appraising Horthy as a soldier who would never consciously break his word of honor, he argued that "indirectly, the regent had to be made the soldier of the Führer."⁶⁰ While Veesenmayer was supported by Ribbentrop, he was opposed by both Himmler and Himmler's representative in Hungary, SS *Obergruppenführer* (Lieutenant General) Otto Winkelmann, who held the position of Higher SS and Police Leader (*Höherer SS-und Polizeiführer*, HSSPF). Hitler's appointment of Veesenmayer contained an ambiguous reference to his authority that was never clarified: it noted that for the tasks of the SS and police, especially tasks connected with "the Jewish question," an HSSPF "who acts according to his instructions" would join Veesenmayer's staff. **(Document 37)** Veesenmayer understood from this that Winkelmann was to follow *his* instructions, but Winkelmann instead implemented his own objectives, following Himmler's orders.⁶¹

On 19 March 1944 Veesenmayer, after being introduced to Horthy on the train to Budapest, began negotiations about a new Hungarian government. His main goal was to keep Horthy in office while appointing a new government, thus assuring the Hungarian public of continuity, and giving a semblance of legitimacy to the German occupation. Hitler and Ribbentrop instructed Veesenmayer to appoint Béla Imrédy as prime minister. He was leader of the Party of Hungarian Renewal (*Magyar Megújulás Pártja*, or MMP), an extreme right-wing party incorporating elements of the Ital-

ian Fascist and German National Socialist programs, in a moderated form.⁶² Imrédy impressed them with his financial expertise and was considered the worthiest right-wing politician. He also had a good relationship with Veessenmayer. Horthy, however, refused to appoint him—not for his politics but because of his Jewish background.⁶³ Himmler and Winkelmann also proposed including in the government members of Hungarian national socialist parties,⁶⁴ which Horthy vehemently opposed.

On 22 March 1944, after three days of hard bargaining, Regent Horthy appointed a new Hungarian government, with Döme Sztójay as prime minister. Sztójay, the former envoy to Germany, was a familiar figure to Hitler and Ribbentrop and an acceptable alternative to Imrédy. The new government comprised the traditional ruling elite. Veessenmayer managed to bring two confidants into important cabinet positions: Lajos Reményi-Schneller as minister of finance, and Béla Jurcsek as minister of agriculture and public supply. In May, Veessenmayer prevailed in installing Imrédy as minister without portfolio for the economy. Andor Jaross, from Imrédy's party, became minister of internal affairs.⁶⁵

Winkelmann won two key appointments in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (although Veessenmayer and Horthy blocked them from cabinet-level positions): László Baký and László Endre, who were named state secretaries. Baký, the parliamentary leader of the Hungarian National Socialist Party, was named state secretary for political affairs in charge of several sections: Public Security (section VII, including State Security); the Police (VI); the Gendarmerie (XX); and Mobilization (XVIII). Endre, previously the deputy prefect of Pest County, controlled not only Public Administration—including county and municipal administration as well as housing authority (sections III, IV, and XXI, respectively)—but also handled the “Jewish question.” On 13 May, Jaross created a subsection under section XXI for the removal of Jews and their placement in collection camps, and he put Endre in charge.⁶⁶

Baký and Endre were hardcore antisemites. Prior to the German occupation, Endre had introduced several anti-Jewish decrees in Pest County's jurisdiction; he would enact nine more under the occupation. On 8 April 1944, the day he took office in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he urged applying the Pest County decrees nationwide.⁶⁷ Baký and Endre guaranteed the cooperation of the Hungarian gendarmerie, police, and civil authorities that would prove crucial in the implementation of Hitler's Jewish policy in Hungary. In effect, they made Hitler's Final Solution now Hungary's as well.

The occupation severely restricted Hungarian autonomy but did not eliminate it. From the beginning to the end, Hungarian officials bargained with, cajoled, and deceived German authorities, making promises that they later ignored. They played a role in concert with the Germans in shaping the character of the occupation. At every important juncture, the Hungarian political leadership had considerable freedom of maneuver to decide on its path. This was especially the case regarding the fate of the Hungarian Jews.

The occupation propelled the Jewish question to the center of political attention and action. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the chief of RSHA, arrived in Budapest on Horthy's

train from Klessheim.⁶⁸ He spent several days in Budapest, and it is possible that he returned at the beginning of April. There are no records of his activities there, but based on his authority and the events that followed, we assume that he was primarily setting up the ghettoization and deportation process.⁶⁹ Before the occupation on 10 March, he had assigned to Budapest the veteran expert of the deportation of European Jewry, SS *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant Colonel) Adolf Eichmann, chief of Department IV B 4 in the RSHA.

Eight *Einsatzkommandos* (operational detachments) were deployed in Hungary with the Wehrmacht. Seven established their offices in key towns in the country, each controlling SS activities in its region of assignment.⁷⁰ Subsequently, they were organized as Security Police and Security Service detachments under a *Kommandeur der Sipo und SD* (KdS), directed by the chief of Security Police and SD in Hungary. The latter, SS *Oberführer* (Senior Colonel) Hans-Ulrich Geschke, reported to Himmler's representative, HSSPF Winkelmann. Members of the seven SS detachments (*Kommando*), numbering around 500–600 personnel in all, could also be deployed for anti-Jewish operations. Eichmann's own detachment, operationally under RSHA headquarters in Berlin, was designated a *Sondereinsatzkommando* (Special Operational Detachment). It included several leading SS experts from past anti-Jewish operations conducted in other occupied territories: Eichmann's deputy, SS *Sturm-bannführer* (Major) Hermann Krumei; SS *Hauptsturmführer* (Captain) Dieter Wisliceny, who had deported the Jews from Slovakia and Greece; SS *Hauptsturmführer* Dr. Otto Hunsche, the legal expert; SS *Hauptsturmführer* Theodor Dannecker, who had overseen the deportation of France's Jews; and SS *Hauptsturmführer* Franz Novak, a deportation transport expert. Eichmann's detachment included no more than sixty-five officers, NCOs, and support staff.⁷¹

To deal with the solution of "the Jewish question" in Hungary, as for most issues of importance, the German leadership established parallel chains of command and channels of communication. Eichmann reported directly to RSHA chief Kaltenbrunner. He met regularly with HSSPF Winkelmann, his nominal superior in the SS chain of command, who then informed Veessenmayer on preparations and progress. Veessenmayer forwarded the information to Eberhard von Thadden in Berlin, the foreign ministry's liaison to Kaltenbrunner and the RSHA. Kaltenbrunner, the chief of the RSHA, was the key person in decision-making concerning the Jews. At the same time, Veessenmayer sent his reports and answered to Joachim von Ribbentrop, the foreign minister, and to Karl Ritter, the special envoy of the foreign ministry at Führer headquarters. The same flow brought orders to Budapest: Thadden communicated decisions by the RSHA to the foreign ministry and Veessenmayer.⁷²

It remains largely a matter of conjecture how the Germans planned to deport the large number of Jews, given their limited forces. The appointment of Baky and Endre as state secretaries guaranteed the cooperation of these key Hungarian officials, and Regent Horthy's consent to their appointment signaled that he was willing to compromise regarding the Jews. Horthy evidently believed the message that was con-

sistently delivered by high-ranking German officials to their Hungarian counterparts: cooperation in the Final Solution would lead to the withdrawal of German police forces.⁷³

Planning Hungary's Final Solution

As we have seen, by the end of March the German occupation officials and the collaborationist Hungarian administration were in place. Solving the Jewish question was at the top of their agenda.

There is a debate among historians whether German and Hungarian authorities devised, in Braham's words, a "master plan" for the concentration, ghettoization, and deportation of the Jews at the beginning of the occupation, or only arrived at the decision in a process of "cumulative radicalization," in which ideological and economic factors played a role.⁷⁴ The debate inevitably raised the question of the historical responsibility of Horthy, the Hungarian government, public administration, and law enforcement. A dearth of documentation keeps this debate alive. We present the extant documents and the unresolved questions. While we have found no documentary evidence of a predetermined German action plan for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews, German intentions and demands had existed for years. The presence of the SS in Hungary intensified the pressure that Hungarian government officials not only failed to resist but to which they readily acceded.

Eichmann and his detachment had a practiced script: first, the arrest of political opponents and influential Jews; second, legislative measures for marking and isolating all Jews, and expropriating their property; next, the physical concentration of all Jews; and, finally, their deportation and murder. From the very beginning of the occupation, German authorities followed this script in Hungary.

Already on 19 March 1944, the Gestapo began arresting Jews on the streets and at railway stations as they tried to flee Budapest. By 31 March, over 3,300 Jews had been arrested in less than two weeks.⁷⁵ The Gestapo also immediately arrested Communists and liberals, as well as leading conservative anti-German politicians (some from the high nobility). They also arrested members of the Upper House, parliamentary representatives of the opposition parties, and Jewish leaders of the economic and financial elite.⁷⁶ With these arrests they eliminated the potential opposition and potential supporters of the Jews.

During the next two days, two of the senior members of the Eichmann detachment, SS *Sturmabführer* Hermann Krumei and SS *Hauptsturmführer* Dieter Wisliceny—both thoroughly experienced in planning and preparation for large scale Jewish operations—established the Central Council of Hungarian Jews. This was composed of eight members who were leaders of the Orthodox and Neolog Jewish communities, as well as Zionists, in Budapest. The council members were made personally responsible for following German orders. Krumei and Wisliceny reassured the Jewish Council that the Jewish community was not in danger; council members

were ordered to convey this message nationwide.⁷⁷ From then on, the Eichmann detachment checked and censored all communications of the Jewish Council.⁷⁸

After the Sztójay government was sworn in, members of the Eichmann commando were delegated as liaisons to government offices. The next step was to persuade the relevant Hungarian authorities to restrict the rights of Jews through regulations in all spheres of life.

Horthy gave “a free hand” to the Sztójay government to issue decrees regarding the Jews, expressing his wish not to influence the government in this matter.⁷⁹ (**Document 2**) According to the Hungarian constitution, decrees could be issued without Horthy’s signature or even his knowledge.⁸⁰ With this step Horthy distanced himself from, and avoided responsibility for, implementation of the Final Solution.

Horthy’s authorization opened the floodgates. Sztójay, at the first meeting of the Council of Ministers, announced that Kaltenbrunner requested certain measures against the Jews.⁸¹ The prime minister’s office and various ministries issued a series of anti-Jewish decrees daily.⁸² On 29 March the Council of Ministers decreed the marking of the Jews with the yellow star, taking effect on 5 April.⁸³ On 4 April, Baky confidentially ordered all mayors and town and village authorities to have their local Jewish communities prepare lists of Jews in four copies and to submit these lists within forty-eight hours to the police, gendarmerie, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁸⁴ Henceforth, in every locality, Jewish committees were responsible for compliance with anti-Jewish measures. Veessenmayer reported that an unnamed “SD expert,” working permanently with Endre, participated in drafting and implementing the anti-Jewish legislation. The SD expert was Eichmann.⁸⁵

Eichmann worked closely with both Endre and the newly appointed liaison officer of the gendarmerie, Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy.⁸⁶ Endre was more than willing to cooperate with Eichmann. His anti-Jewish commitment was a welcome surprise for Eichmann that proved fateful for the Jews. On 4 April, Eichmann discussed with Endre and Ferenczy the most important restrictions on Jews, which required immediate implementation. Based on that discussion, Ferenczy prepared a six-point proposal that suspended the Jews’ right to travel, forbade them to leave their primary addresses (7 April), and ordered the expropriation of their moveable property as well as all valuables and cash generated through transactions between Christians and Jews (16 April).⁸⁷ (**Document 4**)

The next step was the decision for the concentration and ghettoization of the Jews. On 7 April, Baky and Endre convened a meeting in the Ministry of Internal Affairs for high-ranking police officers, gendarmerie district leaders, and public administration officials, especially from Gendarmerie District VIII (Kassa).⁸⁸ Two SS officers from Eichmann’s detachment also attended the meeting. Baky informed the participants that the Jews would be removed from Gendarmerie District VIII (Kassa) in “the near future.” (**Document 6**) It is not clear whether at the same meeting and among the same participants, but on the same day, Endre and Baky distributed confidential Decree No. 6163/1944. BM. Res., titled, “Assignment of dwelling places

for Jews,” which spelled out the details of the plan for the nationwide concentration and ghettoization. The decree included appendixes with specific instructions for the implementation of the plan.⁸⁹ (**Document 7**) The decree began with the statement that the Hungarian government would soon “cleanse the country of Jews.”

The first step was to round up the Jews, “irrespective of sex or age,” by forcibly removing them from their homes and transporting them to designated collection camps and ghettos in cities and larger towns. The police had to perform this task in the cities and the gendarmerie in the provinces. The gendarmerie would also assist the police in cities as necessary; all gendarmerie special companies and training battalions could be deployed at any given time. The decree contained instructions for seizing Jewish property (real and moveable) and all valuables, cash, and assets, except for an allowance of fifty kilograms of luggage, plus food for fourteen days, that each Jew could carry. Local committees, formed of local public servants and police chiefs in cooperation with policemen or gendarmes, were to seal the vacated Jewish homes and take inventory of everything left behind. They were to deliver the inventories to branch offices of the Hungarian National Bank (which, however, refused to cooperate).⁹⁰ Appendix A ruled that all Jews who had to wear the yellow star had to be removed from their homes and listed those who were exempted. Appendixes D and E specified the Jewish property subject to expropriation. (**Documents 7A, 7D, 7E**) Appendix E also ordered body searches for potentially hidden valuables. The distribution list at the end of the decree was comprehensive. It was addressed to the central and local commanders of every gendarmerie and police unit, and all public administration officials, including mayors of cities and towns. The next day, 8 April, Baky sent the decree to all gendarmerie commands, accompanied by an order for its implementation. (**Document 8**)

The sequence of ghettoization and expropriation, as summarized in the decree, signaled that the “cleansing” was imminent and would occur nationwide. Endre, Baky, and Ferenczy, most likely with the participation of Eichmann, divided the country into six zones for operational purposes, following existing army corps lines, each consisting of one or two gendarmerie districts.⁹¹ The zones, in order of the planned concentration and ghettoization—“cleansing,” as it was called officially—were:

- Zone I: Gendarmerie District VIII (Kassa), northeastern Hungary and Carpatho-Ruthenia
- Zone II: Gendarmerie Districts IX (Kolozsvár) and X (Marosvásárhely), northern Transylvania
- Zone III: Gendarmerie Districts II (Székesfehérvár) and VII (Miskolc), northern Hungary
- Zone IV: Gendarmerie Districts V (Szeged) and VI (Debrecen), southern Hungary, east of the Danube
- Zone V: Gendarmerie Districts III (Szombathely) and IV (Pécs), southern Hungary, west of the Danube

Zone VI: Gendarmerie District I (Budapest), the area around Budapest and the capital city itself.⁹²

It was Eichmann's idea to begin the roundup and ghettoization in the northeastern part of the country, the area closest to the approaching Soviet front, a military operational zone that was relatively isolated from the rest of the country. This area also had the largest and least assimilated Jewish population, while its status as a military operational zone provided the pretext for removing the Jews. Eichmann calculated, correctly, that seizure of Jews in that remote area would generate the least political resistance. Subsequently, ghettoization was planned to proceed in the north, east, and west of the country, leaving the isolated Budapest Jews for last. Eichmann dismissed Endre's suggestion to begin the ghettoization in Budapest, arguing that the Jews in Budapest were the most influential and vocal, and their resistance could endanger the completion of the ghettoization and deportation.⁹³

In the historical literature, much attention has been devoted to Decree No. 6163/1944. BM.VII. Res. (**Document 7**) Historians generally agree that this comprehensive decree was a key document that marked a pivotal moment in Hungarian compliance with German demands related to "the Jewish question." The debate was (and is) whether the decree meant concentration and ghettoization, or whether "cleansing the country" and "removal" also meant deportation.⁹⁴ Its text did not include specific language that, in a narrow sense, directed deportations. The decree is unambiguous, however, about the forcible removal of the Jews from their homes and the expropriation of their property, and it clearly signaled that they would never return.

The First Zone of Ghettoization and Concentration: Ungvár as a Case Study

As early as 2 April, the first initiative for the removal and ghettoization of the Carpatho-Ruthenian Jews was recorded. (**Document 3**) In Ungvár, Gendarmerie Colonel Győző Tölgyesy, commander of Gendarmerie District VIII (Kassa),⁹⁶ informed Géza Halász, the councilor of the Ministry of Internal Affairs working at the government commissioner's office in Ungvár, about the German SS in Kassa requesting local Hungarian authorities to remove all Jews from the localities within the military operational zone to the cities of Ungvár, Munkács, Beregszász, Huszt, and Nagyszőlős by 6 April. The head of the public safety department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Gendarmerie Colonel Gyula Király, told Halász to comply, although at this point there was no legislation empowering such coerced Jewish concentration, not even in classified or nonpublic documents.⁹⁷

Tölgyesy and Halász discussed the modes of implementation with Major General Álgya-Pap, commander of public security in Carpatho-Ruthenia, and other military and gendarmerie officers. Because the removal of the Jews would have required railway wagons and some sort of residential arrangements at the destinations, the

The Gendarmerie

The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie was a militarily trained, rigorously disciplined, elite police force operating outside of the cities. Created in 1881, it was based on the French model. The task of the gendarmerie, like that of the police, was to keep law and order, to prevent crime, and to protect the population's safety and property. It was also charged to protect the political establishment from extreme organizations and movements, on both the left and the right.

In organization, administration, and personnel, the gendarmerie differed from the police. The gendarmerie was subordinated both to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and to the Ministry of Defense. In command as well as in organizational and administrative matters, the gendarmerie was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (section XX); in matters of discipline, it was under the direction of the Ministry of Defense. After the German occupation, Gendarmerie Colonel Gyula Balázs-Piri led section XX, under László Baký's leadership; General Gábor Faragho served as superintendent of the gendarmerie. The gendarmerie had a Central Investigative Command posted in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as investigative subdivisions at every district headquarters. Gendarmes swore allegiance personally to Regent Horthy, and they were instilled with a nationalistic and patriotic spirit.

The gendarmerie was a voluntary organization. Its rank-and-file members came from rural areas; they had to be between nineteen and forty years of age, unmarried, in good health and physical condition, and at least 163 cm in height. They also had to be of good moral standing, with knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. After basic training they served an eighteen-month probationary period before being accepted into the gendarmerie. They then had to commit to six years of service. Noncommissioned officers were picked from the rank and file after six years of service. Officers had secondary-school diplomas, and often two years of law school or military school. They were further trained in the Ludovika Military Academy, and they, too, served a probationary period before becoming gendarmerie officers. Officers committed to twenty years of service. Gendarmes were better paid and had better pensions

than policemen, especially if they served under harsh or hazardous circumstances in remote areas. Service in the gendarmerie provided social mobility for many of the peasantry.

The uniform of the gendarmerie had the same khaki color and a similar cut as the army uniform, but it was distinguished by a hard helmet that strapped under the chin, adorned by a large plume of cock feathers on its left side. The uniforms were custom-made; the gendarmes were expected to appear impeccable at all times to lend authority and command respect.

The gendarmerie operated on a territorial principle, organized into ten districts that conformed to the army corps boundaries. Each district had its headquarters in the center and was subdivided into divisions, wings, and, finally, companies. Each company oversaw several village posts, according to the size of territory and population. Rank-and-file gendarmes patrolled the villages in pairs, either on foot or on horseback. Each patrol was assigned a territory of at most 120 square kilometers. Unusual activity was to be reported through the chain of command.

The gendarmerie network completely covered the country, numbering approximately twenty thousand gendarmes during the German occupation.⁹⁵ (**Document 80**) Their territorial organization, discipline, and unconditional loyalty to the Regent and the homeland made the gendarmerie the ideal force for carrying out the concentration and deportation of the Jews.

headquarters of the First Hungarian Army in the area protested, arguing that these requirements would have interfered with troop deployments. By 4 April, it became clear that the removal of the entire Jewish population of Carpatho-Ruthenia could only be carried out with the approval of the German army's central headquarters in Budapest. The incident demonstrated the readiness of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and local law enforcement to carry through the policy of ghettoization of the Jews.

A further confirmation of this readiness is that, on 5 April, Baky ordered the chief of the investigative office and his staff from the National Defense Center to Carpatho-Ruthenia to forestall later accusations and potential abuse in connection with the removal of the Jews. (**Document 5**) The large number of Jews, and the fact that they were cut off from the rest of the country in the military operational zone, served as a catalyst for their ghettoization.

Ferenczy set up his field headquarters in the city of Munkács. He worked together with the leading public administration officials, police chiefs, gendarmerie officers, military leaders, and advisors from Eichmann's staff to concentrate the 146,000 Jews of the region. Approximately 78,000 of these people lived in Carpatho-Ruthenia.⁹⁸

Fortunately, a cache of documents of the Government Commissioner's Office has survived the war, which is nearly complete regarding Ung County and Ungvár in the critical time period between 11 and 27 April.⁹⁹ They provide a day-to-day account of the implementation of Decree 6163/1944. BM. VII. Res. Almost 21,000 Jews lived in Ung County, 9.8 percent of the population in 1941.¹⁰⁰ The Jewish population of the city was one of the highest in the region: 9,576 Jews, 27 percent of the population.¹⁰¹ Ungvár was a key city, the center of the Northeastern Military Operational Zone, the seat of the government commissioner (Vilmos Pál Tomcsányi) and Ung county's public administration, and the headquarters of Ungvár Gendarmerie Division. The documents provide a glimpse into the thinking of Géza Halász, the ministerial councilor delegated to the government commissioner's office in Ungvár from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He ranked above local public administration officials such as György Thurzó, the Ungvár police chief, László Megay, the mayor, and Dr. Károly Biringer, the chief medical officer of the city. It was their task to implement "the assignment of dwelling places for Jews" by deciding when, where, and in what order to remove the Jews from their homes, coordinating the task among their subordinates and with Ferenczy's gendarmes and the local police. A German advisor, SS *Hauptsturmführer* (Captain) Theodor Dannecker, was present in all the important meetings.¹⁰² (**Document 16**)

The documents reveal the attitude and behavior of these officials. They demonstrate that although the primary responsibility for concentrating the Jews fell to the gendarmes, all branches and ranks of the public administration, from the village clerks through teachers, doctors, and if necessary even the military, played a supporting role. The documents show the misery of the Jews during the concentration and in the collection camps: their complete degradation, lack of food, water, and hygiene, and the constant danger of epidemics. We can follow the day-to-day progress of the concentra-

tion and the thinly veiled panic of the competent officials about the rapidly growing number of Jews in the two collection camps, which was their motivation for pushing for the earliest possible and final removal of the Jews from the region. There is no document that would indicate doubt or disapproval of the concentration of the Jews. Some of the police reports, however, mention steps that had to be taken against Christians who hid Jews or Jewish property, or who tried to get food for Jews in the camps.

After 8 April, when the decree for the concentration of the Jews arrived in Ungvár, preparations began immediately. **(Document 8)** On 11 April, the government commissioner called a meeting with the participation of military, police, and gendarmerie officers in which, as Halász recalled, it was decided that the gendarmerie had to collect, transport, and concentrate the Jews in a collection camp.¹⁰³ **(Document 10)** The decision to set up a collection camp instead of a ghetto seems to have been connected with the military's need for housing. Since the city was in the army's deployment area to the Eastern Front, empty Jewish homes were left for the army, and the Jews had to be removed to a camp. At this meeting, issues related to the handling of Jewish property were also discussed, and the following day, Tomcsányi issued confidential decree no. 162/1944 for Carpatho-Ruthenia, which regulated dealing with Jewish moveable property and was sent to all law enforcement and civil authorities. **(Document 11)** As Halász explained to Minister of Internal Affairs Jaross, the authorities, on the one hand, had to take into consideration the specific conditions that the military operations created, while on the other also their experience during the 1941 deportations when they could not protect Jewish moveable property from looting. **(Document 12)** Therefore they proposed to collect Jewish property from the empty homes and place it in houses of worship or larger, centrally located Jewish houses with the names of the owners attached, so as then better to protect those possessions. **(Document 11)** On 12 April, Halász met again with Ferenczy and Lajos Meggyesy in Munkács. They informed him that the concentration of the Jews was to begin on 16 April and continue for a week, during which time all Jews of Carpatho-Ruthenia had to be collected: from Ung county into Ungvár, from Bereg county to Munkács, from Huszt and Ökörmező districts to Huszt, and from Taracvölgy and Rahó districts to Mátészalka. An exception was made for the Jewish population of Ilosva district, which was directed to Beregszász. **(Document 10)** On 15 April, a meeting in Ungvár's police headquarters clarified last-minute property issues and decided on setting up a collection camp on Felszabadulás Street, in a former brickyard, less than a mile from the city center. The officials estimated that the Jews would spend thirty to forty-five days in the camp.¹⁰⁴ **(Document 13)** There was no further elaboration or allusion as to what would happen to the Jews subsequently.

The first document on the concentration of the Jews is not an official report, but the dramatic plea from the Jews of Ungvár to the police chief to leave them in their homes and allow them to house their brethren from the villages of Ung county: the elderly, children, and women whom they saw being dragged into the camp to sleep in cold nights under the sky. **(Document 14)**

The first official record is of 18 April, the inspection results and recommendations of the city's chief physician and his public health team. (**Document 15**) The Fel-szabadulás Street camp was planned for twenty thousand people. At the time of the inspection, it had a single improperly covered pump well and two latrines. The camp was on unhealthy grounds; the clay pits in the brickyard were for many years the source of malaria infections in the city. The chief physician's most important recommendations to protect the city from epidemics that could originate in the camp were for providing enough drinking water and water for cooking and washing, building latrines with proper disinfectant supplies, setting up delousing teams and chambers, and providing separate spaces for those who were infected. The main danger was the potential outbreak of typhus, and the chief physician also considered vaccination against typhus. He urged the mayor to follow up at minimum on providing basic needs: water and latrines. As we will see, this did not happen and the danger of the outbreak of infectious diseases hung over the camp.

The 19 April report of the deputy commander of the camp gives us an idea how Jews from the villages were transported and what awaited them in the camp. (**Document 17**) By nine in the morning, 6,152 Jews had arrived in the camp. The last of them arrived just before eleven the previous night, in complete darkness. The police inspector complained about a lack of guard personnel, lack of properly demarcated camp perimeters, lack of lighting, and lack of guard towers—all circumstances pointing to hastily made arrangements for a large number of rapidly arriving Jews. These were Jews from Ung county, who reached the camp between 16 and 18 April. By eight o'clock on the night of 19 April, their number rose by 764 to 6,916. (**Document 18**) The concentration from the county continued on the twentieth: the next morning, the number of Jews was 8,312.

On 20 April, the concentration of Ungvár's Jews had also begun. The mayor officially announced that all Jews had to be in their homes by eight in the morning and wait for the authorities. First to be rounded up were those who lived in the outer parts of the city, in the first and sixth districts, followed by those in the second and third districts.¹⁰⁵ (**Document 19**) The task was carried out by twenty-one committees, each consisting of two policemen and two city administration employees who carried out the task of taking the Jews from their homes and confiscating their property.¹⁰⁶ Thurzó also reported on improving the lighting of the camp. There must have been serious problems with the water supply because Thurzó told of putting into use a water container of the fire service that constantly delivered water to the camp. He also discussed the use by a guard of a firearm that injured a camp inmate who, in spite of the guard's warning, crossed the perimeter of the camp.

By the morning of 22 April, the camp population grew again: it reached 10,999, of which 8,712 were Jews from rural areas, while 2,287 were from Ungvár, from the fourth and fifth districts. (**Document 20**) Thurzó reported on suicide attempts and one suicide, use of a firearm that resulted in the death of a woman who had tried to flee, and Jews in hiding. The police also arrested six Christians and investigated four

others for hiding Jewish property. Jews in the camp were subjected to body searches; Thurzó noted that they had hidden valuables in the most “impossible” parts of their body. During the investigations, the police also found the silver treasures of the Jewish community buried in the ground. The next day, the morning of 23 April, Thurzó reported that 12,785 Jews were in the camp, as a result of the progress in the removal of Jews from the city: 4,013 at the time. **(Document 21)**

The camp became crowded; it was necessary to set up tents to put a roof over the heads of two hundred new arrivals. Thurzó also took further steps to solve the water supply problem and arranged for lime to be delivered for disinfecting the latrines. Another health measure he introduced was employing delousing agents and setting up a delousing chamber. In the evening of 23 April, the camp reached its capacity; there were 13,733 Jews. While the number of Jews of Ung county did not change, 5,020 Jews (one thousand more) were removed from Ungvár overnight. **(Document 22)** Thurzó reported the establishment of a second camp on 88 Mihály Munkácsi Street, in the former Glück lumber yard. By five in the afternoon, 318 Jews were moved there from the city. These Jews came from the seventh district, where the gendarmerie was also involved in rounding up the Jews. Thurzó requested reinforcement of the guard personnel by thirty Hungarian army soldiers and one noncommissioned officer, which request was approved the same night. He also forbade any visit to the camps, reporting that many Christians were trying to take food and other necessities to the camp, or just gathered around the camp out of curiosity. Thurzó also began investigating and isolating Jews within the camp who fell under suspicion for political reasons.

The concentration of the Jews was still proceeding when Megay, the mayor of the city, reported to the minister of internal affairs that the concentration of Ung county's and Ungvár's Jews into the collection camp was nearly completed. Exaggerating, he predicted that their number would reach twenty thousand. **(Document 23)** Megay informed Jaross that the overcrowded camp was not equipped with the most elementary health needs, such as enough water and a sewage system to remove the excrement of the nearly twenty thousand people. Megay emphasized that an outbreak of infectious disease on the part of the Christian population was, in his opinion, a real danger since the weather was warming up. He asked Jaross for the urgent removal of the Jews from the camp. He forwarded the letter to Tomcsányi as well and asked for Tomcsányi's intervention in the removal of the Jews. **(Document 24)** What that removal would mean is not discussed in any of these documents. However, as we will see, the large-scale deportation of the Jews was discussed and proposed by Veessenmayer on 23 April. By that time, as Veessenmayer reported, 150,000 Jews had already been rounded up in the “Carpathian region.”¹⁰⁷ **(Document 43)**

On 25 April, Thurzó reported to Tomcsányi that rounding up the Jews in the seventh district in Ungvár had not been completed the previous day. A few more streets still had to be “cleared,” which he expected to be done by the same evening. **(Document 25)** By the official count, 14,097 Jews were in the collection camp on

Felszabadulás Street: 8,717 from the county, and 5,380 from the city. The police transported 2,600 Jews from the city to a new camp on Mihály Munkácsi Street. At one in the afternoon on 25 April, 16,697 Jews were in the two camps. Endre, during his inspection tour of Carpatho-Ruthenia, visited both camps in the morning and had no objections to the camp conditions.¹⁰⁸ Detectives of the Center for State Defense registered 451 Jews as politically unreliable and separated them into a barrack within the main camp. On that day, three Jews became sick with scarlet fever and were isolated. The next day, on 26 April, the number of Jews rose to 16,927 in the two camps. **(Document 26)** Some more people were moved to the camp on Felszabadulás Street from the county and the city as well.

Food was in short supply, only eleven thousand meals were distributed in the camp. The authorities counted on the Jews having their own supply and cooking. Thurzó fortified the guarding of the main camp by installing two guard towers with machine guns. He informed Tomcsányi that the concentration would be completed the next morning, and he and Megay would post an announcement in the city that he attached to his report. Meanwhile, Gyula Gyurits, the head of the Ung branch of public administration, ordered all chief constables to start the collection and proper storing of foodstuffs left behind in Jewish homes. This material was to be used for supplying the Jews in the collection camps. **(Document 28)** In the following weeks, however, many of the foodstuffs were sold as perishables before Gyurits's order reached the competent authorities. Transporting the still available foodstuffs was not practicable because of the distance of many localities from Ungvár. Gyurits left provision to the mayor.¹⁰⁹ **(Document 29)** The nagging problem of food supply was one more reason to push for the earliest possible removal of Jews, even if, according to a ministerial order, provision consisted only of "the quantity necessary for subsistence at minimal expense."¹¹⁰ **(Document 35)**

On 27 April Megay and Thurzó announced to the population that the removal of the Jews was completed. **(Document 27)** It was a warning aimed at the Jews who escaped the removal to come forward, and to the Christians who had helped them as well. According to the announcement, "many known Jews" evaded the law that obliged them to register.

On 27 April, Megay also called a meeting to discuss questions that had newly arisen in connection with the concentrated Jews. **(Document 30)** These were related to the state security investigation, collecting the food left behind in Jewish homes for further use, and inventorying and storing Jewish moveable property—all issues that ensued from concentrating almost 17,000 people in the city. A general body search was ordered to collect still hidden valuables, to be conducted by the police with the collaboration of the German Security Police. The city appointed one of its councilors, Dr. László Skultéthy, to handle all kinds of hidden moveable property, money, and valuables.

The participants of the meeting also decided to move those Jews to the camp whose services were previously needed but were no longer required, given the di-

minished population: Jewish doctors, who still practiced in the city, and their family members, as well as administrative and other personnel who helped the Jewish Council. The Jewish Council itself was moved out of the city but not yet into the camp. The meeting adopted a temporary camp regulation that put the police in charge of law enforcement, and a representative of the city in charge of health and administrative issues.

Further documentation on Ungvár relates only to property issues, which occupied city officials for several more months. Two contemporary sources stated the number of concentrated Jews in Carpatho-Ruthenia at around 194,000 and 195,000. (**Documents 46, 69**)

The Deportation Decision and the Extraordinary Deportations

Parallel with the first steps of concentration and ghettoization ran the decision-making process on the deportation. This issue—the most important of the Hungarian Holocaust—is the least documented. No Hungarian documents are extant, and the German documentation has critical gaps. As a result, the question of who decided and when to begin the deportation of the entire Jewish population has been and is still being debated among historians, who interpret the same documents in different ways.¹¹¹

What adds to the confusion is that there is a discrepancy between the Hungarian and German records: while the Hungarian documents are about restricting all aspects of Jewish lives and ordering the concentration and ghettoization of men, women, and children, Veessenmayer and the German foreign ministry, during the same period of time, exchanged cables on sending Jewish forced laborers to Germany.

Hitler's initial demand was for first 50,000 and then 100,000 "Jewish laborers" (*Arbeitsjuden*) to be brought to Germany to build underground airplane factories for the Luftwaffe.¹¹² On 13 April, Veessenmayer conveyed this demand to Sztójay, and the following day he gave Ribbentrop Sztójay's assurance that Hungary would turn over 50,000 Jews "capable of work" by the end of April. In addition, Sztójay promised that 50,000 Jewish laborers would be available in May, drawn from the forced labor battalions of the Ministry of Defense. There was a possibility that the total number of Jewish laborers might reach 150,000. Sztójay assured Veessenmayer that Horthy, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were all in agreement. (**Document 38**)

In the following week, there were frequent exchanges concerning Germany's reception of the Jewish laborers. On 15 April, Veessenmayer reported that according to the Ministry of Defense the first contingent of 5,000 Jewish laborers was ready to go, to be followed by the same number every three or four days. (**Document 39**). On the nineteenth, Veessenmayer informed his superiors that the Ministry of Defense was prepared to transport 10,000 Jews and urgently requested sufficient rolling stock and a response as to the intended destination. (**Document 40**) Deciding where and by

which route to transport the Hungarian “Jewish laborers” was the task of the RSHA in Berlin. The technical aspects were Eichmann’s responsibility, including sufficient rolling stock at the right time and in the right place. **(Document 41)** On 22 April, however, Thadden, based on a telephone discussion with Kaltenbrunner, informed the foreign ministry of Kaltenbrunner’s decision that the 50,000 Hungarian Jews must be taken to concentration camps, not to factories. In the same diplomatic note Thadden indicated that Eichmann, the very same day, was to receive “all the necessary instructions” from Kaltenbrunner, and the decision in writing was also to be sent to the foreign ministry in Berlin. **(Document 42)** The ministry received the instructions in writing on 24 April, confirming that it was impossible to employ Hungarian Jewish forced laborers in factories since Germany was by that time virtually “free of Jews.” They could therefore only be transported to “work camps under the command of Reichsführer SS”—that is, to concentration camps. Kaltenbrunner’s order placed the matter of “Jewish laborers” on the backburner and cleared the way for an even weightier decision. Kaltenbrunner, meanwhile, was waiting for a report from Eichmann before sending any “further notification.”¹¹³ Eichmann’s report, any “further notification” from Kaltenbrunner to Eichmann, and other crucial exchanges between them are missing, however, from the documentation. So are correspondence between Veesenmayer and his superiors and records of phone calls referenced, but not summarized, in the documents.

The missing communications evidently hold the key to the decision on the comprehensive “total” deportation plan that Veesenmayer sent to the foreign ministry on 23 April. **(Document 43)** Veesenmayer reported on the rapid pace of ghettoization in Carpatho-Ruthenia and northeastern Hungary—150,000 Jews had already been “concentrated”—and he outlined a plan for their deportation. He wrote that transport negotiations had begun, and beginning on 15 May, three thousand Jews would be deported daily, first from the Carpathian region, then from Transylvania and the southern border areas, leaving the interior of the country and Budapest to the operation’s conclusion. The destination was Auschwitz. Veesenmayer advised his superiors to give priority to the deportation of the ghettoized Jews and to postpone the deportation of the Jewish laborers. He expressed his agreement with this plan that would serve the purpose of a “total . . . Jewish action.” He asked his superiors for further instructions.¹¹⁴ Veesenmayer’s use of the expression “total and entire” (*ein totales Ganzes*) in connection with the “Jewish action” signaled the intention of deporting the entire Jewish population of Hungary. He remarked that only a lack of rolling stock could hinder the deportations.¹¹⁵ Veesenmayer’s 23 April telegram seems to be a continuation of Decree 6163/1944. BM. VII. res. of 7 April, in the sense that it also encompassed the entire Jewish population and proposed the same regional sequence of deportation as did the decree for the concentration. There were only 15 days between these two fundamental decisions. The nagging question remains whether deportation was already on the minds of Hungarian and German authorities when they issued the decree and “cleansing the country” was a euphemism, or whether the

deportation decision was precipitated by the rapidly advancing concentration and ghettoization.

We do not know who drew up the plan that Veesenmayer delivered and advocated to the foreign ministry, but he wrote the telegram after talking to “competent specialists,” almost certainly Eichmann, Endre and Baky. (**Document 43**)

On 22 April Endre organized a dinner meeting with Jaross and with other key Hungarian and German officials at his father’s estate, Szentkút, outside of Budapest. There is no known record of the discussion at this meeting, only the fact that it took place. Considering the timing and the participants of this meeting, it is possible that the deportation may have been the topic and that the outcome of the discussions may have been communicated to Veesenmayer the same night. This, in turn, may have prompted Veesenmayer to forward the outline of the deportation plan to Berlin: Veesenmayer’s cable was transmitted at 1:30 AM on 23 April.¹¹⁶

The most plausible explanation is that Kaltenbrunner, during his visit in late March, laid the groundwork for the deportation and set the mechanism in motion. Once Kaltenbrunner left, details of the ghettoization and subsequent deportation were probably negotiated in general terms by Veesenmayer and the Hungarian government on the one hand, and in particular by Eichmann and Endre on the other hand. The implementation at the highest level was the task of Eichmann on the German side and of Endre, Baky, and Ferenczy on the Hungarian side.¹¹⁷ The huge number of Jews ghettoized in Carpatho-Ruthenia within a week certainly created an urgency in the decision-making. This may be the explanation for the deportation plan that Veesenmayer sent to his superiors, a plan which had no connection to any of his previous communications to or from Berlin.

Hungarian and German documents, read in conjunction, suggest that German and Hungarian officials jointly came to an agreement on *total* deportation over a critical fifteen-day period from 7 April, when the Hungarian government issued the decree on rounding up and concentrating the Jews, to 23 April, when Veesenmayer submitted the coordinated proposal to Berlin. There were two other important steps in this process: on 13 April, the Hungarian government permitted the deportation of “Jewish laborers,” and on 19 April, Baky ordered the removal of Jews from the Southern Border Zone, indicating that deportation was the goal. Veesenmayer’s plan called for sending to the Reich more than 150,000 Jews immediately, and, ultimately, the entire Hungarian Jewish population. We do not know exactly when or how Kaltenbrunner approved the plan for total deportation, but without his consent it could not have gone forward.

Remarkably, no written agreement—either between the German and Hungarian governments or between Eichmann and Endre—emerged from this process.¹¹⁸ There is no doubt, however, that the Hungarian side must have agreed, at least verbally, to the deportations. The only indication of such an agreement was one sentence in the summary minutes of the 26 April meeting of the Council of Ministers: “The Council of Ministers agrees [to the German demand of] sending 50,000 Jewish forced la-

borers [to Germany], as well as that their family members would go as well [*sic*].”¹¹⁹ Thadden, visiting Budapest in May, understood as much and reported back to Berlin. **(Document 71)** As Baky confirmed, he negotiated with Eichmann, who “promised that he would obtain German consent and organize the deportations” (underlined in original). **(Document 80)**

While concentration and ghettoization in the first zone unfolded, the Ministry of Internal Affairs called a meeting on 19 April to plan the concentration and ghettoization of Jews in the Southern Border Zone—parts of Gendarmerie Districts V (Szeged), IV (Pécs), and III (Szombathely). German military authorities had designated the Southern Border Zone, facing Serbia with its partisan warfare, a military operational zone, like Carpatho-Ruthenia. **(Document 31)** At this meeting, Baky’s instructions strongly indicated the impending deportation. Baky ordered the preparation of a sufficient number of collection camps to provide “temporary” accommodations for the Jews before they were “deported” (*elszállít*). Baky also directed that an “adequate number of railway cars” be at the ready at the “right time.” He ordered “strict” body searches to be conducted, both when the Jews were rounded up and before they were “deported” from their “temporary” collection places.

On 26 April, the concentration of Jews into five ghettos and collection camps began in the Southern Border Zone. Hungarian authorities collected 2,675 Jews in Nagykanizsa (Gendarmerie District III, Szombathely), 1,580 in Barcs (Gendarmerie District IV, Pécs), and 5,275 in Szabadka, Szeged, and Baja (Gendarmerie District V, Szeged). **(Document 69)** As early as 28 April, German SD personnel deported around 800 Jews to Auschwitz from one of the collection camps in Nagykanizsa. According to postwar statements, German authorities initiated and carried out this deportation; at German request, Hungarian gendarmes were involved in guarding the transport.¹²⁰ Neither Ferenczy nor Veessenmayer reported this or the later deportation from the Southern Border Zone.¹²¹

There were other early deportations carried out by German SD personnel. Veessenmayer reported that on 29 April, one transport of “Jews capable of work” had departed for Auschwitz; the second would depart the following day, 30 April. The first consisted of 1,800 men and women, aged 16–50 years, seized from Budapest; the second transport carried 2,000, seized from Topolya. **(Documents 44, 45)** There is no further German or Hungarian documentation regarding these transports. It is certain, however, that they arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 2 May 1944. SS personnel selected, registered, and tattooed 486 men and 616 women destined for labor assignments, and immediately gassed the remaining 2,698 men and women in Birkenau.¹²²

The deportation plan was finalized during Endre’s eight-day survey of the ghettos and collection camps in Carpatho-Ruthenia (Gendarmerie District VIII) and northern Transylvania (Gendarmerie Districts IX and X), and in the Southern Border Zone (Gendarmerie Districts V and VI) beginning on 24 April. Eichmann accompanied Endre for the first leg of the trip, along with other German and Hungarian officials. In view of the large number of Jews—between 150,000 and 200,000 at the time of

Endre's inspection tour (**Documents 43, 46**)—and the consequently overcrowded conditions, Endre and Eichmann came to the conclusion that the Jews had to be moved from their haphazardly organized accommodations faster than previously proposed. This would mean deporting a larger number of Jews, which would require more trains.¹²³

This idea was presented in the so-called train conference of 4–5 May in Vienna, where Reich and RSHA logistical and transportation experts planned train schedules and routes for “the deportation of a larger number of Hungarian Jews.”¹²⁴ The meeting was led by Eichmann's transportation expert, Franz Novak, along with the Hungarian Gendarmerie captain Dr. Leó László Lulay (Ferenczy's aide and interpreter); in attendance were German, Slovak, and Hungarian railway officials.¹²⁵ For the Germans, the paucity of trains was a significant logistical dilemma to solve without sacrificing military priorities. Ultimately, the trains provided for deportation were those returning empty to Germany after transporting German military personnel and supplies to the Balkan theater of operations.¹²⁶ Most of these trains were grain transport rail cars. The familiar small windows blocked by bars, high on the side of the railcar, appear in many photos, such as in the well-known *Auschwitz Album*.¹²⁷ Some seventy to eighty people were crammed into each rail car, supplied with air only through these windows.

The RSHA decided to send the trains through northeastern Hungary to the town of Kassa (on the border with Slovakia), and then across Slovakia to Auschwitz. Slovakia would have preferred that the trains not cross its territory; but for political reasons the RSHA chose to avoid the alternate route through Budapest, so as not to upset the population of the Hungarian capital.¹²⁸ (**Document 48**) The operation's planned starting date was 15 May,¹²⁹ to begin in the Carpathian region. The German authorities planned on first deporting the 325,000 Jews who were already ghettoized,¹³⁰ or whose ghettoization was in process or imminent. The specialists scheduled four trains to depart every day, each train to carry 3,000 Jews: a total of 12,000 Jews to be deported daily. (**Documents 49, 50**) This was four times the number of Jews and trains that Veesenmayer had proposed on 23 April. The dramatic increase in the number of daily deportees resulted in emptying the country of Jews outside of Budapest within eight weeks.

The Deportations and Their Documentation: The Ferenczy Reports

“Cleansing” the country of Jews—that is, their concentration, ghettoization, and finally deportation—was carefully recounted, as the operation went forward, in summary “events reports” compiled from the daily stream of local gendarme reports. These events reports form the centerpiece of this documentary edition. Signed and transmitted by Gendarmerie Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy to his superiors,¹³¹ the reports are an extraordinary record in the history of the Holocaust, presenting a chronological account of the way Hungary systematically eliminated its Jewish pop-

ulation. Most of what we know about the deportation of the Jews is derived from Ferenczy's reports.

In the last week of March 1944, Ferenczy became the official liaison of the Hungarian government authorities to Adolf Eichmann. His appointment was signed by both Minister of Internal Affairs Jaross and Superintendent of the Gendarmerie Faragho.¹³² According to postwar statements, Eichmann himself had requested Ferenczy in this role.¹³³ Ferenczy's appointment to this important position was remarkable, as he was neither a well-known pro-German officer, nor did he speak German well. (Ferenczy's aide, Captain Leó László Lulay, was fluent in German and served as his interpreter; Eichmann had his own interpreter.) Whether or not German authorities suggested Ferenczy for the position, he certainly enjoyed the full confidence of Eichmann, Endre, Baky, and Jaross, the key decision-makers for the Final Solution in Hungary.

Ferenczy took operational orders from Endre, but Eichmann and other German specialists also advised him as the operation unfolded. Eichmann placed members of his *Kommando* within Ferenczy's headquarters, as well as in local gendarmerie field offices in each operational zone.¹³⁴ Endre himself did not participate in policy implementation once he had laid down the principles of the ghettoization and had held information meetings for the officials who would lead the operation in each zone. However, he closely followed the process through Ferenczy's reports, and he intervened whenever he thought it necessary.¹³⁵ Ferenczy was in charge of implementing the ghettoization, economic plunder, and deportation process. His reports show him issuing numerous orders: deploying (or modifying the deployment of) gendarmerie, police forces, and civil servants; requesting reports, supervising, and initiating investigations in certain cases; reprimanding and initiating disciplinary measures; and various other interventions. His reports give the impression not of someone simply following orders, but of someone with the authority and autonomy of an operational commander acting within broad strategic objectives. He addressed his event reports to Endre, Faragho, Gyula Király (chief of section VII in the Ministry of Internal Affairs), and Colonel József Czigány (chief of the Investigative Command of the gendarmerie).¹³⁶

There is no evidence that Ferenczy sent any reports before 3 May, even though he was in Munkács,¹³⁷ and concentration and ghettoization had begun on 15 April (the last day of Passover) and 16 April in the first zone—the northeastern part of Gendarmerie District VIII (Carpatho-Ruthenia). Ferenczy filed his first events report on 3 May from Kolozsvár and the last one on 9 July from Budapest, filing a total of seventeen such reports. They document how 434,351 Jews were turned from individuals into “shipments” and “transports,” and how everything they owned was transformed into Hungarian state assets. Ferenczy set up his field headquarters in Munkács, the administrative center of Carpatho-Ruthenia. On 19 April, back in Budapest, he reported on his initial impressions of the operation at the information meeting in the Ministry for Internal Affairs. (**Document 31**) A week later, another meeting took

place in the city of Szatmárnémeti in preparation for the ghettoization and concentration of Jews in Zone II (northern Transylvania, including Gendarmerie Districts IX, Kolozsvár, and X, Marosvásárhely). (**Document 32**) The regular reporting of events started from this zone; Ferenczy's office compiled its reports on the basis of the daily accounts he required to be submitted to him by gendarmerie posts.¹³⁸

Between 3 and 10 May, Ferenczy filed six events reports from Kolozsvár, which gave a detailed account of how, beginning at dawn on 3 May, in every locality, gendarmes and policemen forced the Jews to leave their homes, how they transported them to one of the eleven collection camps or ghettos that had been set up, and how they searched them for valuables. (**Documents 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56**) On 10 May Ferenczy reported that in the first seven days, 98,000 Jews had been collected in Gendarmerie Districts IX and X. (**Document 56**)

The reports reveal the active role that civil administration officials played in the expropriation of Jewish homes and moveable property. They show that Hungarian law enforcement and the civilian bureaucracy attached the utmost importance to the seizure of Jewish property, to such a degree that this emerges as an important—or even the main—motivation for ridding the country of its Jews. Some local officials acted to enrich themselves, but in general they seem to have followed the rules of expropriation. They and Ferenczy's gendarmes followed up on every allegation about Jews or Christians hiding valuables, to ascertain that nothing was left behind. Ferenczy was satisfied that “the authorities are carrying out the tasks with the greatest degree of eagerness, efficiency, and flexibility.” (**Document 52**) The reports refer to the presence of German SD personnel (or simply “Germans”), but they leave no doubt that Ferenczy and his staff carried out the ghettoization on their own, and that the deportations could not have occurred without them.

The Launch of Deportations

On 12 May, Ferenczy was again in Munkács to hold an information meeting for the gendarmes, police officers, and leading public officials of Gendarmerie Districts VIII, IX, and X (Zones I and II). This time, the topic was, unambiguously, the deportation of Jews. The notes of this meeting are the first Hungarian document on the details of the deportation plan. It was to be launched from this region two days later, on 14 May. (**Document 34**) The plan was to deploy 110 trains, each carrying around 3,000 Jews, bound for Kassa, where they would be turned over to German authorities. Ferenczy ordered the mayors to provide bread for two days for the Jews: 400 grams (less than a pound) for each. He added, “Carrying other food is prohibited.”

Ferenczy was the most senior government official at this meeting; thus, it was he, rather than Endre or another superior, who officially announced, as policy, that the Jews were to be deported. It was not a surprise: all involved knew that such large numbers of Jews could not be kept in makeshift ghettos and collection camps. But deporting more than 275,000 Hungarian citizens to the German Reich represented

a new level in the anti-Jewish drive.¹³⁹ Remarks delivered at the meeting demonstrate Hungarian officials' zeal and lack of mercy or humanitarian concern: "If necessary, even 100 can be loaded in one railroad car. They can be loaded like herring. The Germans need tough people. Those who cannot endure will die. No need for stylish ladies in Germany."¹⁴⁰ (**Document 34**) The "cleansing" of the country had begun.

Ferenczy filed three reports on the launch of the deportations—two from Munkács (21 and 29 May) and the third from Hatvan (8 June), 60 km northeast of Budapest, where he had relocated for the start of the next stage, the third zone of ghettoization and deportations. (**Documents 57, 58, 59**) Between 14 May and 7 June, a three-week period, Ferenczy directed the removal of 275,415 Jews from Hungarian collection camps to the entrainment centers, where they were loaded onto ninety-two trains for transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau. (**Document 59**) This number represented more than half of all Jews who would be deported from the country. The majority, 175,995, were deported from Gendarmerie District VIII (Kassa) in fifty-seven trains between 14 May and 7 June. Among them were the 16,168 Jewish citizens of Ungvár and Ung County, whose concentration is discussed above. Five trains, on 17, 22, 25, 27, and 31 May, left with them for Auschwitz-Birkenau. Each transport, with the exception of the train on 17 May, carried well over three thousand Jews. Thadden, newly arrived in Budapest from Berlin, reported with satisfaction: "The Jewish question in Hungary . . . is rapidly approaching a solution with the vigorous support of state secretaries László Endre and Baky."¹⁴¹ (**Document 71**)

About a third of the deported Jews sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau were capable of work (**Document 71**); about half (or slightly more) of those were women. Considering the urgent need for labor, Oswald Pohl, head of the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office (SS-WVHA), asked Himmler's permission to deploy women for construction work.¹⁴² Himmler strongly supported the idea, stressing the importance of "healthy nutrition"—such as "raw vegetables" and sufficient garlic imported from Hungary—for the female labor force.¹⁴³

Next, the anti-Jewish operation targeted Jewish populations largely in the interior of Hungary (within the borders set by the Trianon Treaty). Ferenczy's move to Hatvan was the beginning of this phase, Zone III of the "cleansing." Ferenczy's reports (**Documents 58, 60, 61**) indicate that the transition to this phase was seamless and based on prior planning.¹⁴⁴ In his 21 May report, Ferenczy summarized the plan for setting up his headquarters in Hatvan and sending his aide, Captain Lulay, to the second train conference planned in Vienna for 10 June. (**Document 57**) On 26 May, Thadden, reporting on his visit to Budapest, wrote that the deportation of *all* Hungarian Jews—with the exception of eighty thousand Jewish men in forced labor—was to follow. (**Document 71**) Ferenczy and Endre scheduled an information meeting for the next zone, Zone III, of the "cleansing" operation; it took place on 3 June in Budapest.¹⁴⁵ (**Document 58**)

Eichmann and his Security Police played a more significant role in this phase than they had previously. The experience of the chaotic conditions in the Carpathian

region and northern Transylvania (reflecting, in some cases, the lack of proper coordination among the Hungarian law enforcement and civilian officials) prompted them to streamline the process for the upcoming “cleansing” in northern Hungary. On 29 May, Ferenczy reported that, following German advice, gendarmes would immediately transport the Jews to collection camps as soon as they were rounded up. These camps also served as entrainment centers: the Jews would be deported shortly after their arrival, eliminating the transitional step of ghettoization.¹⁴⁶ (**Document 58**)

Eichmann’s men also took command of the Jews in the collection camps, as well as running the “technical aspects” of the entrainment. The German Security Police requested food for five days rather than two (as previously) since the Jews after arrival in Auschwitz were to be “selected” and immediately transported to other “workplaces” by train. A further German demand was to transport *first* the sick, the old, and their family members, rather than leaving them for the last train. (**Document 58**)

On 7 and 12 June, Ferenczy wrote his reports from Hatvan, where he had set up headquarters for the Zone III operations. (**Documents 60, 61**) The roundup began on 5 June. Within five days, a total of 51,829 Jews had been forced into the eleven collection camps in Gendarmerie Districts II (Székesfehérvár) and VII (Miskolc). The subsequent deportations, by twenty-one trains, began on 11 June; German and Hungarian authorities planned to be finished by 15 June. No final report from this operation zone is known to exist, so the final total number of deportations is unknown.

Before the fourth “cleansing action” began in Gendarmerie Districts V (Szeged) and VI (Debrecen), Endre, Baký, and Ferenczy held an information meeting on 10 June in Szeged, where they raised the number of Jews to 3,500 people per train to further accelerate the deportation process. (**Document 36**) They ordered a detachment of twenty gendarmes to guard each train, and they issued detailed instructions on the concentration and deportation process. The gendarme patrols received a four-point checklist; they were required to report on (1) possible corruption and bribery of Christians by Jews in exchange for favors; (2) any irregularities that occurred during ghettoization and deportation; (3) any excesses committed by the authorities in their treatment of the Jews, and particularly use of weapons; and (4) the reaction of the local population to the operation and any other noteworthy events. (**Document 68A**) Almost all of these local activity reports vanished either during or after the war, but a small sample survives, submitted by gendarmes in the city of Szolnok and delivered by courier to Ferenczy. These patrol reports followed the four-point scheme (as other jurisdictions presumably did as well), and Ferenczy’s summary reports addressed these same topics. Ferenczy’s instructions authorized the use of firearms in the event of resistance or attempted escape from the collection camps.

On 16 June, the concentration and then deportation of Jews began at the seven collection camps set up in Zone IV. Ferenczy filed two reports, one on 17 June from Kiskunfélegyháza, his final field headquarters, and one on 29 June from Budapest. (**Documents 62, 63**) The deportations of 40,505 “individuals of the Jewish race” in fourteen trains began on 25 June and lasted four days.

The Exceptions: The Strasshof Transports

In the midst of the deportations, little attention was paid to the trains that were directed toward Vienna. Ferenczy did not mention—although local gendarmerie authorities had reported it to him—that approximately 15,000 Jews had been sent via Budapest to Austria instead of Auschwitz. Those transports were directed to the concentration camp at Strasshof, in response to an urgent request by the mayor of Vienna, Hanns Blaschke, conveyed to Kaltenbrunner on 7 June. Kaltenbrunner agreed to send four transports with about 12,000 Jews to Vienna-Strasshof, provided that the Austrian authorities would confine and guard the Jews in a camp, and provided that they and their families would be subject to “special action” (*Sonderaktion*)—that is, that they could be transported to Auschwitz to be killed at any time. Kaltenbrunner estimated that only about a third of the Jews in those transports would be capable of work.¹⁴⁷ **(Document 73)**

Blaschke’s request coincided with the final phase of negotiations between Rezső Kasztner, representing the Budapest Relief and Rescue Committee, and Adolf Eichmann. In mid-June, Eichmann suddenly became accommodating and declared that, for a significant sum of money, he was prepared to send thirty thousand Jews to Austria and “put them on ice” there, instead of deporting them to Auschwitz.¹⁴⁸ Eichmann was well aware of the likelihood that Jews would be sent to the Vienna area in any case, in response to Blaschke’s request. He thus exploited the opportunity to collect payment—that is, ransom—for the planned transport, while demonstrating his “good will” toward the Rescue Committee. Despite the coincidence in timing and Eichmann’s deception, there was no connection between the decision on the Strasshof transports and Kasztner’s rescue efforts.¹⁴⁹

Most of the Jews sent to the Strasshof camp were randomly selected, but there were also some prominent Jews among them, as well as relatives of Jews in forced labor.¹⁵⁰ One report remains on the Strasshof transports, from Szolnok: a gendarme staff sergeant reported to Ferenczy that on 25 June, at 10:00 PM, German SS and military personnel deported the first group of Jews from the Szolnok collection camp in the direction of Budapest—a routing that had up to that point been carefully avoided. Germans carried out the entrainment and provided the escort; Hungarian gendarmes were on guard duty around the train to prevent escape attempts.¹⁵¹ **(Document 68H)** On 28 June, a second train from Szolnok left via Hatvan to Kassa, following the usual route leading to Auschwitz, and guarded by Hungarian gendarmes. **(Document 68K)** One train from Szeged and two trains from Debrecen were also directed to Strasshof. Another transport of 6,000 Jews, from Szeged and Bácsalmás, initially took the usual route toward Kassa; but close to the border, about half of the carriages (with all the Jews from the collection camps in Szeged and some from Bácsalmás) were uncoupled and directed to Strasshof.¹⁵² These cars constituted the fifth train destined for Strasshof. On the basis of survivor accounts, as many as 80 percent of the approximately 15,000 Jews deported to Strasshof may have survived the war.¹⁵³

We have found another wartime document probably relating to the Strasshof transports—a note from the Reich economic minister to the foreign ministry on 3 August 1944, complaining that the “14,700 Jews from Hungary who are now in forced labor in the Vienna and Lower Danube districts arrived without any domestic equipment. . . . Clothing, household items, blankets, etc. were confiscated by Hungarian gendarmerie.” (**Document 74**) Historians also relied on postwar statements in judicial proceedings and survivors’ accounts. The most reliable is a survivor’s account of a woman who was transferred from the ghetto in Mezőtúr to Szolnok and deported from there to Strasshof.¹⁵⁴

On 30 June, as a result of the negotiations between Eichmann and Kasztner, 1,684 Jews were allowed to leave Hungary, among them prominent Jews from Budapest and from other locations (mainly Kolozsvár). Their train—disguised as a deportation train—was directed via Vienna and Linz to Bergen-Belsen, though not to the concentration camp itself but to a camp maintained for exempted Jews. Some of these Jews in August, but the majority half a year later, were transported to Switzerland.¹⁵⁵

The Last Phase of the Deportations

Prior to the collection and deportation of Jews in Zone V, Ferenczy called another meeting for 22 June in Siófok, where Endre and Baky briefed the participants.¹⁵⁶ The fifth zone of the “cleansing actions” included Gendarmerie Districts III (Szombathely) and IV (Pécs). Between 30 June and 3 July, 29,225 Jews were collected in eight collection camps. Over the following three days, ten trains deported 29,556 Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The gendarmerie and Germans completed the “cleansing” operation by 6 July, and Ferenczy filed two short reports on 30 June and 9 July. (**Documents 64, 65**) Hungarian and German security and civil authorities demonstrated a well-practiced, systematic approach to the collection and deportations of Jews, which proceeded like clockwork.

On the same two days, 30 June and 9 July, Ferenczy also filed reports on the collections and deportations in the sixth zone, including towns in the greater Budapest area in Gendarmerie District I (Budapest). (**Documents 66, 67**) He reported that his men had seized 24,128 Jews between 30 June and 3 July and had deported them all by 8 July, aboard eight trains.¹⁵⁷

Ferenczy totaled the numbers in his final report, dated 9 July 1944, after deportations were completed in the sixth zone: in all, 434,351 “individuals of the Jewish race left the country” between 14 May and 9 July. He declared that, with the exception of Budapest, the Jews had been “moved out from the entire country.” Besides the Budapest Jews, there remained only those serving in military forced labor or in war factories, converted Jews, and Jews in mixed marriages, as well as any in hiding. Ferenczy emphasized that he had received no reports of abuse, maltreatment, or excesses committed by Hungarian law enforcement authorities. (**Document 67**)

In his earlier reports, Ferenczy had used the passive voice when writing about the ghettoization and deportations of the Jews, sanitizing the sufferings of hundreds of thousands of people by the use of bureaucratic terms: “Jewish actions,” “cleansing actions,” “removal,” “transports.” He also used expressions associated with the treatment of animals, such as “being driven” to camps, and “collecting” and “loading” the Jews onto trains. In the final reports, however, he uses the active voice, as if the Jews had “left the country” and “moved out” on their own initiative.

While Ferenczy reported incidents of lawlessness and minor offenses committed by civil authorities, police, and gendarmes, he never reported the abuse and torture that the gendarmes committed while conducting body searches for valuables. Hungarian and German authorities considered body cavity searches of Jewish women a necessity. Ferenczy intervened only when local female clerical staff conducted the searches of Jewish women; in those cases, Ferenczy ordered the employment of midwives and nurses. **(Document 51)** The places where the searches took place were called the “mints,” because the Jews were beaten and tortured into confessing where they had hidden their valuables.¹⁵⁸ Ferenczy mentioned that the police in the towns of northern Transylvania, especially in Nagyvárad, were not up to the task of searching for valuables, and that he instead deployed the gendarmerie training battalion of Nagyvárad to carry out the searches.

After the war, survivors recalled that the gendarmes had brutally beaten and tortured the well-to-do Jews. Applying electrodes to the genitals of men and women was a common form of torture. It went so far that Gendarmerie Colonel Paksy-Kiss was tasked to conduct an investigation, which reportedly was inconclusive because the Jews subjected to the torture had been deported.¹⁵⁹ On 21 June, Endre, in his account to the Council of Ministers, denied any wrongdoing on the part of the gendarmerie and stated that the ghettoization and deportations were conducted in a “Christian spirit.” **(Document 81)** On the same occasion, Faragho, the defense ministry’s superintendent of the gendarmerie, expressed satisfaction with the gendarmerie, claiming that of the twenty thousand gendarmes, only three had to be disciplined. **(Document 80)**

Reading between the lines of Ferenczy’s reports, it is clear that the Jews lived under terrible conditions in the temporary ghettos and collection camps. There were not enough shelters for the large number of people simultaneously uprooted from their homes, especially in Carpatho-Ruthenia and northern Transylvania, and they spent several weeks in temporary locations. They lived under crowded conditions in the ghettos, established hastily in provincial towns and without adequate sanitary conditions. The ghetto dwellers, however, were still far better off than the Jews brought to collection “camps” set up in abandoned brickyards, lumber yards, mills, and stables, often under the open sky. These places lacked food, drinking water, and hygiene. Among the most overcrowded ghettos and collection camps were those in Munkács, Ungvár, Máramarossziget, and Nagyvárad. Some 27,000 people lived in the city ghetto of Nagyvárad, with fourteen or fifteen people to a room.¹⁶⁰ Without

reporting on these conditions, Ferenczy made several mentions of outbreaks of typhus and dysentery and reported having ordered quarantines for some ghettos and camps. (**Documents 52, 53**) Following the ghettoization and deportations in the first three zones, however, when the collection and deportation process had been expedited, reports of typhus disappeared because the Jews spent very little time in the overcrowded, unsanitary temporary camps and ghettos.

Incidents of suicide, as the only way to escape the horrors of ghettoization and deportation, also appeared in the reports. In Marosvásárhely, seven people committed suicide. (**Document 51**) There were suicides in Szatmárnémeti, Vajdaszentiván, and Győr, as well as a series of suicides in Szolnok, Bácsalmás, and Békéscsaba. (**Documents 53, 61, 63**)

Escape attempts occurred, but these were infrequent and rarely successful. In two cases, in Nyíregyháza and Munkács, Ferenczy reported the “effective” use of arms. (**Document 57**) Successful escapes did, however, occur in Ungvár, where a deputy clerk allowed some of the prominent and well-to-do Jews to walk out of the camp and disappear. The clerk had the support of some police officials. German Security Police indignantly informed Ferenczy about the lack of proper supervision in Ungvár, and Ferenczy immediately investigated the case. He fired the responsible civil and police officials and ordered a gendarmerie lieutenant colonel to take over the command of the camp. (**Document 58**) In the village of Oláhlápos, two brothers with their five children managed to flee; there is no evidence in later reports that they were recaptured. (**Document 52**)

Ferenczy never turned a blind eye to rescue attempts. He showed zeal and commitment in preventing the escape of any Jew, no matter the circumstance or the individuals. He consistently used his exceptional authority to persecute both the Jews and anyone who helped or attempted to help them. The case of his fellow gendarme officer, Captain Dr. Endre Nagy, stands out. He married Baroness Alexandra Hatvany, who was Jewish, and then hid his bride in his apartment. Ferenczy had her arrested and initiated proceedings against the gendarmerie captain. (**Document 60**) When the mayor in Szatmárnémeti exempted three Jewish families (nine individuals) who were raising pigs on a farm they had leased, Ferenczy ordered them taken to the ghetto and had the mayor turn over the farm to a Christian landowner for management. (**Document 55**) In Munkács, Ferenczy caught and arrested a detective trainee as he was trying to help a Jewish girl escape from the camp, smuggling out documents and valuables as well. He also reported on an army first lieutenant who had interceded with Ferenczy on behalf of a Jewish woman and who had, for this purpose, left his post without permission. Ferenczy also sent a citation ordering questioning of a resident of Dés, who had filed a complaint with the government commissioner in the interest of Jewish infants, the infirm, and old people. (**Document 57**) Ferenczy also arrested and turned over to Eichmann a member of the Jewish Council in Budapest, Dr. Béla Berend, and his wife, who had tried to free their relatives from the collection camp in Sátoraljaújhely by providing them with forged papers. (**Document 59**)

The Jewish forced labor service posed a problem for Ferenczy. The Hungarian minister of defense was committed to providing the troops and their logistic support with a labor force; he thus continued to call up Jewish men for military forced labor.¹⁶¹ On 10 May, Ferenczy complained about contradictory steps taken by Hungarian and German authorities concerning forced labor. On the one hand, the army issued “mass draft calls and addressed the draft letters for delivery in the collection camps too.” The German Security Police, on the other hand, referred to an agreement with the Ministry of Defense that barred drafting Jews for forced labor from the camps where they had been collected. Ferenczy decided to stop the delivery of such draft letters to collection camps even before receiving orders from a superior, although he knew that the deportations would begin in a couple of days, rendering the issue moot. **(Document 56)** At Endre’s intervention, the Ministry of Defense agreed to halt the delivery of draft letters to the collection camps—though it never fully complied. The issue remained a source of frustration for both Ferenczy and the German Security Police. In some cases, the military clearly tried to save Jewish men from deportation. **(Documents 57, 58, 61)**

International Pressure and Allied Advances

As preparations advanced for the deportations from Budapest, relations became tense, not only between Horthy and the Sztójay government, but also between Horthy and Veessenmayer. Behind the scenes, a power struggle was taking place between the unconditional supporters of Nazi Germany and the traditional political elite backing Horthy that feared for its own survival in event of a German defeat.

The reason was the rapidly deteriorating military situation of Germany and its satellites. On 5 June, Rome fell to the Allies. On 6 June, the Allies landed in Normandy. On 22 June, the Soviet army launched its summer offensive (codenamed *Bagration*) and destroyed the German *Heeresgruppe Mitte* [Army Group Center] in Belarus. In June and July, repeated air raids on Budapest and other cities conveyed a strong warning from the Allies.

Beyond the military defeats, there was another reason that a fault line appeared in the German-Hungarian alliance. The SS, deceiving the Hungarian government, had expropriated the Weiss Manfréd conglomerate—the biggest Hungarian armament factory together with its associated large industrial firms—while giving free passage to the factory’s Jewish owners and their extended families. This action, which deprived the Hungarian state of huge revenue, outraged Horthy and the majority of the political elite. Himmler’s own special representative, SS *Standartenführer* (Colonel) Kurt Becher, had served as the chief negotiator of the Weiss Manfréd deal, which was concluded in secret, without even Veessenmayer’s knowledge.¹⁶² Horthy’s bitterness toward the German alliance deepened even more after Hitler refused his request to withdraw the Gestapo and SS from Hungary, which by their very presence, he felt, symbolized Hungary’s subjugated status.¹⁶³

To the outside world, the crisis centered on the deportation of the Jews, which continued at a rapid pace in western Hungary and was fast closing in on Budapest. For the Hungarian leadership, the treatment of the Jews had become a symbol of Hungary's willingness to cooperate with German demands, following the German occupation in March 1944. Even for Horthy, however, the deportation of the Budapest Jews represented a red line that he and his supporters hesitated to cross. In the middle of June, the Jews in Budapest were ordered to move within eight days to buildings whose residents were mostly Jewish. These buildings were marked with a yellow star.¹⁶⁴ This order heightened the fear in the Jewish community of imminent deportation. The Jewish Council desperately tried to avert this fate by pleading with its supporters abroad and with Horthy for his intervention.

In June 1944, the international press revealed for the first time the extermination of Jews in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau, based on the accounts of two Polish Jews who managed to escape.¹⁶⁵ Deportation of the Jews was now understood to mean extermination. External pressure increased on Horthy through protests and pleas by neutral countries, especially Sweden and Switzerland, as well as by Pope Pius XII through the nuncio in Budapest, Monsignor Angelo Rotta. The bishop of the Calvinist Church, László Ravasz, applied internal pressure, and other churches joined in taking a stand specifically against the deportation of converted Jews. All these factors forced Horthy to react.

Veesenmayer first reported to Berlin on tensions with the Hungarian leadership on 21 June. **(Document 89)** He did not sound the alarm just then, but he signaled that in the wake of the Weiss Manfréd deal, working with Hungarian authorities on every level had become difficult. Veesenmayer referred to a secret letter sent by Horthy to Sztójay, in which the Regent blamed the government for the harsh treatment of the Jews.¹⁶⁶ **(Document 79)** In that letter, Horthy claimed that he had stayed in his position after the German occupation out of duty to the nation, but that pro-German officials had circumscribed his sphere of action and he remained uninformed (he insisted) about how ghettoization and deportation unfolded. He accused the government of handling the Jewish question contrary to Hungarian mentality, conditions, and interests, and he pointed out that the Hungarian measures exceeded those taken in Germany. The central theme in Horthy's letter was a protest against the excesses, "gratuitous cruelty," and "inhuman" treatment of the Jews that occurred during the ghettoization and deportations. Horthy called for removing Endre and Baky from their responsibilities over Jewish issues, as he held them primarily responsible for the excesses.

Horthy outlined the two categories of Jews that he thought should be exempted from deportations: converted Jews and Jews with skills or expertise essential for the country, such as engineers, physicians, and technicians. He did not, however, call for a halt to the deportations. His letter, as Veesenmayer noted, was self-serving: he was trying to create an "alibi for the English and Americans in case the war does not end well." **(Document 89)** The ghettoization and deportations, and reaction to the op-

eration among foreign governments, were the subject of two extraordinary meetings of the Council of Ministers, on 21 and 24 June, apparently prompted by Horthy's letter to Sztójay. (**Documents 80, 82**) On 21 June, the government requested written and verbal reporting from Endre and Baky on the course of the ghettoization and deportation, the atrocities that had occurred, and the conduct of the gendarmerie. Sztójay had also invited Lieutenant General Gábor Faragho, the superintendent of the gendarmerie, to join the meeting.¹⁶⁷ (**Document 80**)

Mihály Jungerth-Arnóthy, permanent deputy foreign minister, summarized the mounting accusations and indignation coming not only from Hungary's enemies but also from neutral countries and the Vatican. The foreign press and official dispatches "talked about the extermination of Jews" and how Hungarian authorities packed eighty Jews into a railcar with one bucket of drinking water. Endre and Baky emphasized the "orderly fashion" of ghettoization and deportation, as well as Eichmann's leading role in the deportation. They denied the atrocities and acknowledged only a few excesses, while insisting that the anti-Jewish drive was carried out in "Christian spirit." (**Document 81**) The conclusion reached by the Sztójay government, whose members had actively supported the "cleansing" of the country of the Jews, was merely that "excesses" had to be avoided, and some kind of exceptional measures must be worked out for the converted Jews.

At the 24 June meeting, the Council of Ministers discussed the position of the Vatican as well as proposals by the Swedish Red Cross (backed by the king of Sweden). The Swiss government, supported by the British government and the US War Refugee Board, also proposed to help a certain number of Jews to escape. (**Document 82**) Jungerth-Arnóthy summarized these various proposals, trying to persuade the government that making such concessions was in the country's best interest. He argued that the "radical solution of the Jewish question" would be "a very heavy burden" on Hungary after the war. And he drew attention to the fact that other German allies—specifically, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria—still had significant numbers of Jews.¹⁶⁸ Romania had declared its willingness to allow the emigration of forty thousand of its Jews (for significant compensation), and also had informed the United States that it would permit the transit of Hungarian Jews to Palestine. The Hungarian Council of Ministers supported the rescue proposals in principle and authorized Jungerth-Arnóthy to begin negotiations with the Germans. There was general agreement that the converted Jews must have preferential treatment in the rescue efforts, in part to placate the leaders of the Hungarian churches. Halting the deportations entirely, however, was not on the table.

Finally, Horthy called a meeting of the Crown Council for 26 June. He reviewed the international and domestic protests against the persecution of Jews, and he stated his wish that the deportations be halted—or, in the event of further German demands, he proposed that Hungary withdraw its participation in deportations. He also requested that the military forced laborers (and their family members) be deployed inside the country and not transferred or deported. Again, Horthy insisted on

relieving Endre and Baky of their duties.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, as described above, deportations continued from Gendarmerie Districts V (Szeged) and VI (Debrecen) and began in Gendarmerie Districts III (Szombathely) and IV (Pécs). On 26 June, President Roosevelt sent a strongly worded warning to the Hungarian government, followed by US Army Air Forces B-24 bombers on 2 July.¹⁷⁰

Under growing international pressure, the Hungarian government found it necessary to issue a communiqué aimed abroad.¹⁷¹ The final text of the communiqué was vetted and approved by Veessenmayer, Winkelmann, and Eichmann. The Hungarian government called the accusations of “cruelty and even mass murder” during the deportations “malicious fabrications,” claiming that “humanitarian considerations had been taken into account” when entire families were deported together. It was further asserted that the deported Jews had sufficient amounts of food, adequate sanitary conditions, and medical care. The Hungarians emphasized that the over 200,000 Jews in Budapest were only in danger from Anglo-American “terror bombing,” in which they had suffered “heavy losses,” including eighty-nine English and American Jews. The exemptions that the Hungarian government granted to Jews from deportations were also stressed in the communiqué. (**Document 95**)

Suspension of Deportations: Survival of the Budapest Jews

Horthy’s indecision—expressing his desire for change while doing nothing to devise a new course—created an opportunity for Endre, Baky, and Jaross to proceed with the deportation of Jews from Gendarmerie District I (Budapest), which included the small towns around Budapest and the city itself, with approximately 200,000 Jews. They ordered more than three thousand gendarmes into Budapest, where the gendarmerie was normally not operating and not present. The pretext was the anticipated flag award ceremony of the “Galánta” Gendarmerie Training Battalion, scheduled for 2 July in Budapest. In the last days of June, gendarmerie units appeared in and around the city. On 28 June, Endre, Baky, and the commanders of the gendarmerie battalions met with Eichmann at the county hall in Budapest to work out the details of the Budapest action.¹⁷² The Jews of the Budapest area were to be rounded up as of 30 June in two collections camps and deported between 6 and 10 July, to be followed by rounding up the Jews of Budapest in a swift operation conducted by the gendarmes in the city. (**Document 66**) The deportation from Budapest was long planned. In his 26 May report, Thadden alluded to a “one day big operation . . . in which strong Hungarian gendarmerie forces from the provinces, all special units and police training schools, as well as Budapest mailmen and chimney sweeps will be deployed” (all underlined in original). (**Document 71**) Veessenmayer certainly had previous knowledge of the Budapest plan.¹⁷³ On 30 June, he had first reported to Berlin that simultaneously with the concentration of Jews in Zone V, “smaller special operations” began in the Budapest suburbs as preparatory measures to facilitate the “operation in the capital.” (**Document 75**) However, on the same day, he had

modified the information, reporting that the Budapest “operation” had to be delayed due to Horthy’s initial objection, which he only withdrew after Jaross’s “energetic” intervention. **(Document 76)** At the 5 July meeting of the Council of Ministers, Jaross had indeed insisted that despite the protests of neutral countries, the deportations had to proceed according to the schedule set in April, including the deportation from Budapest. Failure to do so would undermine the authority of the government. **(Document 83)**

Citing the repeated Allied air raids on Budapest, Horthy, however, canceled the flag award ceremony, thereby eliminating the occasion for the presence of the gendarmes in the city.¹⁷⁴ He gave credence to warnings and rumors in his inner circle that Baky was planning to carry out a coup against him with the gendarmes, and he decided to prevent any such attempt. On 5 July, he ordered an armored and an infantry regiment to Budapest, under the command of Colonel Ferenc Koszorús. Horthy also appointed the commander of the Palace Guards, Major General Lázár, to be in charge of Budapest. During the night of 5–6 July, Lázár brought the commanders of the gendarmerie training battalions to the palace under military escort and ordered them to withdraw the gendarmes from Budapest, who indeed left the city.¹⁷⁵

During the same night, Horthy reluctantly and temporarily halted the deportations of Jews from Budapest. There seem to be no causal connections between the two events, even though the order for the removal of the gendarmerie from Budapest and halting the deportation of the city’s Jews coincided. Horthy’s decisions, however, resulted in a delay that in the end prevented the deportation of the Budapest Jews. Sztójay informed Veessenmayer that Horthy stopped the impending deportation from Budapest. He also told Veessenmayer that Horthy and the Hungarian government were aware through Hungarian intelligence sources of the extermination of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland. **(Document 91)**

On 8 July, Horthy himself informed Veessenmayer about the Baky coup attempt and the suspension of deportations. **(Document 93)** Softening his tone toward Veessenmayer, Horthy assured him that, after selecting out the converted Jews, he would be ready to order the deportation of the Budapest Jews.¹⁷⁶ Veessenmayer warned Horthy of the danger created by the presence of several hundred thousand Jews in Budapest, in the fifth year of the war.

Horthy’s suspension of the deportations applied only to the city itself; it did not protect Jews in the towns outside Budapest. **(Documents 67, 77)** Units of the Galánta Training Battalion that had been ordered to leave Budapest participated immediately thereafter in the deportation of 24,128 Jews in its environs (6–8 July). **(Document 67)** Jaross told Veessenmayer that, despite Horthy’s directive, he allowed the deportations to proceed from those towns. **(Document 94)**

On 8–9 July, Sztójay and Jaross assured Veessenmayer that the deportations would resume, notwithstanding Horthy’s order. **(Documents 91, 94)** They expressed concern about reports from Hungary’s western border that SS units, numbering about one thousand men, were prepared for deployment to Budapest for deportation.

Veesenmayer denied those reports, insisting that German authorities wanted the Hungarians themselves to carry out the deportation from Budapest.¹⁷⁷ As before, there were insufficient German SS and police forces available for carrying out the deportations, a confirmation of the fact that without the deployment of the Hungarian gendarmerie and police the deportations would not have been possible.

Horthy's delaying action frustrated Eichmann. Having encountered no previous opposition in Hungary, he was eager to complete the deportations. On 19 July, Eichmann—on his second attempt—had 1,220 Jews deported from the internment camp in Kistarcsa. His first attempt, a week earlier, had failed due to the intervention of the Hungarian camp commander. On 24 July, the Eichmann detachment deported a second transport of 1,500 Jews from the internment camp of Sárvár.¹⁷⁸ About a month later, when news of these deportations emerged, the Red Cross protested. The Hungarian government informed its embassy in Switzerland that the Germans had carried out these deportations without the knowledge or involvement of the Hungarian government, and that the Hungarian government had in fact protested to the German government. (**Documents 85, 87**)

On August 2, the Council of Ministers convened again to plan the deportation of Jews from Budapest. Jaross proposed collecting the Jews from Budapest city districts VI, VII, and VIII, where large numbers were living, to be transferred to a camp outside the city for deportation. (**Document 84**) This was, as it turned out, Jaross's last opportunity to weigh in on the matter of deportations. On 7 August, "at their own requests," Horthy relieved Jaross, Imrédy, and Kunder of their duties and appointed Miklós Bonczos as minister of internal affairs.¹⁷⁹ On 10 August, the new cabinet discussed the situation of the Budapest Jews once again.¹⁸⁰

By mid-August, Veesenmayer was under pressure from Berlin to establish a starting date for the deportations from Budapest. Veesenmayer as well as the Hungarian officials understood that their agreement to those deportations was the basis for Germany's consent to the rescue of Jews by Sweden and Switzerland for emigration to Palestine—altogether 7,000–9,000 individuals.¹⁸¹ (**Document 96**) Veesenmayer was confident that Horthy would agree to the deportations, lest he lose face with the neutral countries by undermining their rescue arrangement. Eichmann's account of his 13 August conversation with Bonczos seemed to confirm that assumption. According to Eichmann, Bonczos had assured him that the deportations from Budapest would start on 25 August with the approval of Horthy.¹⁸² A few days later this was confirmed by Grell, adding that the first transport with six trains and 20,000 Jews would leave on 27 August, followed by three trains and 9,000 Jews every day. The gendarmerie was supposed to be deployed for the concentration of the Jews. (**Document 97**)

On 23 August, the prime minister's office prepared a statement about renewing the deportations of Jews. The Hungarian government, with Horthy's consent, declared itself ready to "make available for the German war economy" all Jewish forced laborers whose family members were already in Germany (ca. 55,000–60,000

individuals), as well as “Jews who have a criminal record or pose a threat to the public (which fact will be determined by the government authorities), whose presence threatens the public food supply and the internal safety of the country.” In other words, government authorities could arbitrarily place Jews in one of the undefined categories and deport them. Though there is no evidence that the document was sent to German authorities, it certainly indicates the intention of the Hungarian government and (apparently) Horthy to satisfy German demands to continue the deportation. In exchange, the Hungarian government asked for assurances that these Jews would only be deployed for labor, that they would be deported under the supervision of a German-Hungarian joint committee, that no more than fifty Jews could be placed in a “railway car,” and that the Hungarian Red Cross would take care of their provisioning. The Hungarian government also requested that the rest of the Jews in Hungary would remain in Hungarian collection camps and would work for the Hungarian war economy. The Hungarian government further requested the withdrawal of Eichmann and the transfer of Jews and other prisoners from German to Hungarian authorities.¹⁸³ **(Document 86)**

By then, Horthy himself was no longer in favor of continued deportations. On 24 August, Veessenmayer reported that Horthy—though he had ordered the concentration of Jews by 28 August, in five camps to be set up outside of Budapest—“did not envisage deporting the Jews from these camps to the territory of the Reich.”¹⁸⁴ **(Document 98)** Hearing that Horthy had refused any further deportations, Eichmann was prepared to ask the RSHA for permission to leave Hungary because he considered his presence superfluous. **(Document 98)**

The background to these events was the dramatic news from the Romanian front. The Red Army had encircled fifteen German army corps by crossing the Prut River and occupying the key towns of Iași and Kishinev, a move that threatened Bucharest. On 22–23 August, the German-Romanian front collapsed. King Michael, in a successful coup, deposed and arrested Romania’s fascist leader, Antonescu, and stopped all military operations against the Soviet Union. On 25 August, Romania declared war against Germany and its allies. Romanian troops, fighting on the Soviet side, would enter Hungarian territory a few days later. Horthy’s reaction to Romania’s volte-face was counterintuitive. He told Veessenmayer that he was committed to standing at Germany’s side, no matter what happened, and he asked Veessenmayer to remind Hitler that he had in fact warned him about the traitorous Romanians. At the same time, he balked at continuing the German deportation program.

In view of the Romanian events, Himmler himself suspended the deportations. His order reached Veessenmayer via Winkelmann, early on the morning of 25 August. **(Document 99)** Himmler’s order was a tactical retreat, motivated by Germany’s military interest in keeping Hungary in the alliance. Since the deportation of the Budapest Jews was such a contested issue, Himmler was willing to suspend the program until the situation at the front could be stabilized. In the end, however, Hungary,

too, became a theater of war, and any possibility of completing the deportations evaporated.¹⁸⁵

Notes

1. The revolution of October 1918 was named after the aster flowers that the supporters of the revolution wore on their hats and clothing. Count Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955) was a member of one of the leading Hungarian aristocratic families. During World War I he was a pacifist and became a follower of Woodrow Wilson's principles. He became prime minister and president of the first Hungarian republic.
2. Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), president of the United States (1913–1921), who in 1917 led the US into the European war. After the war, at the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson insisted on a peace treaty that would prevent future conflicts. He summarized his principles in the Fourteen Points, which made national self-determination the fundamental basis for border modifications in central and eastern Europe. He was instrumental in the establishment of the League of Nations, a supranational association that was to guarantee the territorial integrity and independence of all nations, but which lacked enforcement power.
3. The Entente powers consisted of Great Britain, France, their respective colonies, and the Russian Empire (until 1917), joined by Italy and Japan; the Central Powers included Imperial Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire.
4. On "Jewish revolutionaries," see Vera Ránki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1999), 124–26.
5. Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya (1868–1957). See appendix 3 for fuller details of his life. The best English-language summary of Hungary's interwar history is Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina/Osiris, 1999).
6. Sir George Russell Clerk (1874–1951) was the head of the east European section of the Foreign Office. During the Paris Peace Conference, he served as Lord Curzon's private secretary. He was sent to Romania and Hungary to reach an agreement on the removal of Romanian troops from Hungary, on the final borders, on consolidation in Hungary, and on formation of a coalition government acceptable to the victorious powers to represent Hungary at the Versailles peace negotiations.
7. Romanian troops remained in Hungary east of the Tisza River until March 1920. On the background of Horthy's election, see Dávid Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2011), 73–82.

8. Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós*, 90–91; Krisztián Ungváry, *Horthy Miklós. A kormányzó és felelőssége, 1920–1944* [Miklós Horthy. The regent and his responsibility, 1920–1944] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2020), 17–24; Dávid Turbucz, “Horthy Miklós és a fehérterror: Az erőszak szerepe Horthy Miklós hatalomra jutásában 1919–1920-ban” [Miklós Horthy and the white terror: The role of violence in the ascension of power of Miklós Horthy], in *Történelem és erőszak* [History and violence], ed. Linda Margittai and Béla Tomka (Szeged: Hajnal István Kör—Társadalomtörténeti Egyesület, 2021), 417–31.
9. The extraordinary interpenetration of Jewish financial capital was a peculiarity of the development of capitalism in Hungary; the ten most important financial institutions had interests in three hundred companies and 74–80 percent of their directors and board members were Jewish. Around fifty Jewish families, intertwined through marriage, constituted the industrial and financial aristocracy. They were grouped around the two largest financial institutions and their associated industrial monopolies: the Credit Bank (Hitelbank) and the Hungarian General Coal Mining Company (Magyar Általános Kőszénbánya Társaság) of the Vida-Perényi-Ulmann-Kornfeld families, and the Commercial Bank (Kereskedelmi Bank) and the Weiss Manfréd Works—Coal Mining Company of Salgótarján (Weiss Manfréd Művek—Salgótarjáni Kőszénbánya Társaság) of the Weiss-Kornfeld-Chorin-Mauthner families. These were also connected through the Commercial Bank to the Biró-Fellner-Goldberger families, who held large stakes in steel and iron production, sugar production, and the textile industry. See Iván T. Berend and György Ránki, “A magyar társadalom a két világháború között” [Hungarian society between the two world wars], in *Gazdaság és társadalom* [Economy and society] (Budapest: Magvető Book Publishing, 1974), 328–29; and Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése* [Robbing the dead. The economic annihilation of the Hungarian Jews] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2005), 13–22.
10. The most influential of these organizations were the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete), founded by demobilized soldiers in fall 1918, and the Hungarian Association for National Defense (Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet, MOVE), which was formed by military officers under the leadership of Gyula Gömbös, Tibor Eckhardt, and Endre Zsilinszky (who later assumed the name, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky) to replace the officer’s association of the Austro-Hungarian army in November 1918. MOVE became radicalized during and against the revolutions, especially when Gyula Gömbös, its cofounder, became its president in January 1919. Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 1:22–23.
11. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919–20 consisted of a group of negotiations and treaties among belligerents that were named after the chateaux around Paris in which they took place: the Treaty of Versailles (the allied powers with Germany),

- the Treaty of Saint-Germain (Austria), the Treaty of Neuilly (Bulgaria), and the Treaty of Sèvres (the Ottoman Empire). The Trianon negotiations took place in the palace of that name on the grounds of Versailles.
12. György Ránki, “A Clerk misszió történetéhez” [To the history of the Clerk mission], in *Gazdaság és társadalom* [Economy and society], ed. Iván T. Berend and György Ránki (Budapest: Magvető, 1974), 368–416.
 13. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:25–32 (“Trianon and Its Impact”).
 14. The treaty also stipulated that the 12,000 gendarmes could include no more than 600 officers. Act VII/1922 regulated the strength of, as well as the means to increase the strength of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie and Royal Hungarian State Police. Prior to World War I, approximately 12,000 gendarmes served in Hungary, but spread over the entire pre-Trianon territory (283,000 square kilometers, versus the 93,000 square kilometers after 1920). Judit Molnár, “Crime and Punishment? The Hungarian Gendarmerie during and after the Holocaust,” *Shoah: Intervention—Methods—Documentation* 4, no. 1 (2017): 59–77.
 15. Ignác Romsics, *Erdély elvesztése, 1918–1947* [Loss of Transylvania, 1918–1947] (Budapest: Helikon, 2018), 298–99.
 16. Even after Romania changed sides in the war on 5 September 1944, the Hungarian army crossed the Hungarian-Romanian border and attacked Romanian forces in southern Transylvania, a hopeless fight against the Romanian forces now allied with the advancing Red Army, and an irresponsible political and military decision. Romsics, *Erdély elvesztése*, 359–60.
 17. The Axis powers were Germany, Italy, and Japan, the signatories of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. The alliance’s goals were the territorial revision of the peace treaties after World War I, fighting the hegemony of the “plutocratic” Allied powers, and fighting communism.
 18. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:87. The figures are from 1920.
 19. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:91. They represented 51 percent of the independent commercial establishments, 59.4 percent of bank employees and officials, 45.7 percent of salesmen, 59.5 percent of bookkeepers, and 75.1 percent of agents.
 20. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:91.
 21. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:91. Jews made up 55.2 percent of physicians, 49.2 percent of lawyers, 30.4 percent of engineers, 31.7 percent of scientists and writers, and 26.7 percent of actors.
 22. Law XXV. The government modified the law in 1928. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:34–36. There is a debate in Hungarian historical scholarship between those who see a continuity, “a straight line” leading from the Numerous Clausus law to the anti-Jewish legislation in 1938, 1939, and 1941, and those who argue that antisemitism as official policy was the result of external factors. Mária M. Kovács gives a succinct summary of this debate: “The Numerus Clausus and the

- Anti-Jewish Laws,” in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, ed. Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2017), 37–43.
23. Bethlen was prime minister between 1921 and 1931. An important step of his economic consolidation was, after lengthy negotiations, obtaining a League of Nations loan in the value of 250 million gold kronen, which opened the way for further long-term private loans leading to a wave of investments and an economic boom in the 1920s.
 24. Gömbös was prime minister from 1932 to 1936. He was propelled to power by the instability caused by the economic crises, which also forced him to moderate his stand against Jews because he needed the support of Jewish families in Hungary’s financial sector. See Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professors and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
 25. It must be noted that the anti-Jewish laws were not enacted under German pressure. Their aim was the economic plunder of the Jews, redistribution of Jewish wealth among the Christian population, and prevention of the migration of Jews from the newly annexed territories toward the center of the country. See Regina Fritz, ed., *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945* (hereafter *VEJ*), vol. 15, *Ungarn 1944–1945* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), 20–21.
 26. Vera Ránki considers the introduction of the anti-Jewish legislation and the Horthy era as the “end of the assimilationist contract” and the beginning of the “process of exclusion.” *Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, 135, 167 (and generally chaps. 4–5).
 27. László Karsai, “Anti-Jewish Laws and Decrees in Hungary, 1920–1944,” in *The Holocaust in Hungary: A European Perspective*, ed. Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2004), 143–66.
 28. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:144–47.
 29. Braham, 1:177–80.
 30. Braham, 1:225–27, 252n4.
 31. On 12 February 1944, Horthy sent a letter to Hitler asking for the withdrawal of all Hungarian army corps from the front in Soviet Ukraine, initially to the northeastern foothills of the Carpathian range, in order to defend the Lviv–Odesa railway line. He wrote that if they were needed, these units could then be further deployed for the defense of Hungary on the Hungarian side of the Carpathians. Miklós Szinai and László Szűcs, eds., *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai* [Confidential papers of Miklós Horthy] 62), 408–10. An English-language edition appeared as *The Confidential Papers of Admiral Horthy* (Budapest: Corvina, 1965).
 32. The SD was created in the 1930s to provide domestic and foreign intelligence to the Nazi party. During the war it was at the forefront of the extermination of

the European Jews. The SD consisted of *Amt* (office) III and VI within the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, or RSHA). The RSHA under Ernst Kaltenbrunner (from January 1943) included all police organizations, among them the Gestapo. His direct superior was Heinrich Himmler, leader of the entire SS, which encompassed the RSHA, the concentration camp system, the slave labor camps, and the Waffen SS (a powerful military organization independent of the Wehrmacht)—on all of which Germany's war and persecution of the Jews depended.

33. Wilhelm Höttl, based in Vienna, was acting head of the intelligence and counterintelligence section for central and southeastern Europe (section VI E) within the foreign intelligence office of the SD. Consult appendix 3 for further biographical information.
34. Höttl had extensive contacts in Hungary. Most likely, he was the author of the revised occupation plan, as he claimed after the war, or wrote it with his colleague, SS *Obersturmführer* (First Lieutenant) Ernst Kienast. Wilhelm Höttl, *The Secret Front: The Inside Story of Nazi Political Espionage* (London: Phoenix, 1988), 201–2. The draft memorandum is not dated, but one page of the memorandum is written on the verso of an unfinished letter dated 11 March. The draft was introduced at Nuremberg as Exhibit UK-503 (Nuremberg document designation D-679). C. A. Macartney was the first to draw attention to the importance of this document: *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929–1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 225–35.
35. There are no German or Hungarian documents on the Klessheim negotiations. The nonverbatim minutes of the Crown Council that Horthy called on 19 March upon his return to Budapest are the primary Hungarian source. See Szinai and Szűcs, *Confidential Papers*, 422–31. The other source is Szombathelyi's 20 March summary of the Klessheim visit. Szombathelyi tried to persuade Hitler and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel (chief of the German armed forces high command) that a German invasion was unnecessary and to negotiate its postponement. Szombathelyi, however, was not present at Horthy's meetings with Hitler. Horthy briefed him and the rest of his delegation about the discussion after his meetings with Hitler. Szombathelyi's memorandum is published in Szinai and Szűcs, *Confidential Papers*, 432–38.
36. Kállay became prime minister in March 1942 and also held the portfolio of minister of foreign affairs until July 1943. He came to power when Nazi Germany's fortunes in the war were changing and that manifested itself in his policy toward Germany and the Jews. Ránki, *Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, 143–44. Further biographical information on Kállay is in appendix 3.
37. Through intermediaries and low-level contacts, Kállay and his circle communicated to Great Britain and the US that Hungary would not fight against their troops if they reached Hungary's border. In exchange, Kállay asked that Soviet troops not enter Hungary. The offer was not realistic, and especially not after

- January 1943 when the Allies agreed in Casablanca on a policy toward the Axis states of unconditional surrender. On Kállay's negotiations, see Gyula Juhász, *Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1919–1945* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 208–84.
38. On 20 January 1942 at Wannsee, near Berlin, Chief of the Security Police and the SD Reinhard Heydrich chaired a meeting for bureaucrats at state secretary level, and SS leaders of equivalent rank, to “create clarity in fundamental questions” regarding the “Final Solution of the European Jewish question.” Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 158–59.
 39. Szinai and Szűcs, *Confidential Papers*, 425, 428.
 40. In the Wannsee Conference's protocol, Hungary's Jewish population was given as 742,000, not including converted Jews. Heydrich foresaw that “dealing with the problem in these individual countries will meet with difficulties due to the attitude and outlook of the people there, especially in Hungary and Romania.” He proposed that “in order to settle the question in Hungary, it will soon be necessary to force an adviser for Jewish questions onto the Hungarian government.” Quoted from the appendix in Roseman, *Wannsee Conference*, 157–72, at 164–66.
 41. Martin Luther (1895–1945), *Ministerialdirektor* (permanent secretary) with the rank of undersecretary of state in the German foreign ministry, served as liaison to the SS and was a driving force for the deportation of the Jews from countries under Axis control. He represented the foreign ministry at the Wannsee Conference.
 42. László Karsai, “A végzetes esztendő: 1942 a magyar diplomaták jelentéseiben” [The fateful year: 1942 in the reports of Hungarian diplomats], *Hadtörténeti Közlemények* [Military history publications] 117, no. 3 (2004): 859–83; Christian Gerlach and Götz Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel. Der Mord an den ungarischen Juden 1944–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004), 81–82.
 43. Fritz, *VEJ*, 32–34; Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 81–83. Sztójay warned Kállay not to doubt Hitler in his threats against the Jews, because facts in occupied Poland and Ukraine had already proven his intentions; also László Karsai, *Holokauszt* [The Holocaust] (Budapest: Pannonica, 2001), 234–35.
 44. Memorandum of the Hungarian government to the German foreign ministry, László Karsai, “A holokauszt utolsó fejezete” [The last chapter of the Holocaust], *Beszélő* 10 (2005): 74–91, at 77.
 45. Fritz, *VEJ*, 36; Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 86.
 46. Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Destruction of the Hungarian Jewry: A Documentary Account* (New York: Pro Arte, 1963), document no. 110. Karsai, “A holokauszt utolsó fejezete,” 3–4, based on Sztójay's report, 23 December 1943, MNL OL-K63—Külügyminisztérium politikai osztályának iratai—1943-21/7 [Documents of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs].

47. István Deák, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2015), 86.
48. The figure (61,548) is provided in the 1941 publication of the Central Statistical Office.
49. The Kamenets-Podolsk massacre at the end of August 1941 was a prelude to the Holocaust. Removing the Jews who could not provide proper identification to prove Hungarian citizenship was initiated by Hungarian authorities. They were responsible for the administrative process, for rounding up the Jews, and transporting them to the Ukrainian border area, to a no-man's-land. They were massacred by German SS mobile killing units occupying western Ukraine. The 1941 massacre occurred when antisemitic propaganda was whipped up after the attack on the Soviet Union and after the parliament discussed and adopted the third anti-Jewish law. It has an extensive historical literature. Tamás Majsa was the first historian who wrote on the massacre: "A körösmezei zsidó deportálás 1941-ben" [The Jewish deportation from Körösmező in 1941], in *A Ráday Gyűjtemény Évkönyve, IV–V, 1984–85* [The yearbook of the Ráday Collection, 4–5, 1984–85] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia / Soros Alapítvány Bizottság, 1986), 59–86. An excellent summary is Kinga Frojimovics, *I Have Been a Stranger in a Strange Land: The Hungarian State and the Jewish Refugees, 1933–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007). See also Ádám Gellért and János Gellért, "Az 1941. évi körösmezei deportálások. A kitoloncolásokat jóváhagyó minisztertanácsi döntés háttere" [The deportations to Körösmező of 1941. Background of the Council of Minister's approval of the deportation], *Betekintő* no. 2 (2012), online at: https://betekinto.hu/sites/default/files/betekinto-szamok/2012_2_gellert_gellert.pdf (accessed 3 April 2025). Two new monographs on the topic include George Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder: 1941 Rehearsal for the Hungarian Holocaust* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2022), and Tamás Stark, *Hosszú út az első magyarországi deportáláshoz* [Long road to the first deportation from Hungary] (Budapest: HUN-REN Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Történettudományi Intézet, 2023).
50. For the killing of Jews in Novi Sad and in other parts of the northern Bácska district in January 1942, see the short summary in Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:241–51, and a comprehensive recent treatment by Árpád von Klimó, *Remembering Cold Days: The 1942 Massacre of Novi Sad and Hungarian Politics and Society, 1942–1989* (Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018).
51. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:234–41, 241–47, and 2:1508. The exact number of the Jewish population in early 1944 cannot be established. According to Kinga Frojimovics, 20,000–25,000 Jewish refugees arrived and lived in Hungary between 1939 and 1945. Frojimovics, *I Have Been a Stranger*, 229.
52. The figures are based on the 1930 census. Hungarian Jews belonged to three religious groups: Neolog, Orthodox, and Status Quo Ante. The difference was in the way they conducted their religious services. The Neologs (also called Reform

- or Congressional) reformed traditional ritual practices and allowed organ music and singing in their synagogues, and decorations in their cemeteries. The Orthodox community had “western” and “eastern” congregations. Jews of German and Moravian origins belonged to the former, those of Galician origin to the latter. The “eastern” Orthodox Jews were Hasidic. All Orthodox Jews adhered to the traditional practices of their religion. Status Quo Ante followers rejected both practices and the division. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:97–98.
53. In post-Trianon Transylvania there were 115 Jewish communities: eighty were Orthodox and twenty-three Neolog, with twelve Status Quo Ante. Three-quarters of the Jewish population was Orthodox. In the Slovak and Carpatho-Ruthenian areas of Czechoslovakia there were 197 Jewish communities: 141 Orthodox, thirty-one Neolog, and twenty-five Status Quo Ante. Kinga Frojimovics, *Szét-szakadt történelem. Zsidó vallási irányzatok Magyarországon 1868–1950* [Torn history. Jewish religious tendencies in Hungary 1868–1950] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2008), 207–9, 216–19.
 54. By 1 May 1944, over 53,000 German troops were in that region, but fewer than 1,800 were deployed around Budapest, and slightly over 2,000 in western Hungary. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 125.
 55. On 2 June, Germany and Hungary signed a financial and economic agreement. György Ránki, *1944 március 19. Magyarország német megszállása* [19 March 1944. The German occupation of Hungary], 2nd ed. (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978), 215–226.
 56. Draft minutes of the Klessheim negotiations that Horthy did not sign. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 103.
 57. Simultaneously, Veessenmayer received promotion to SS *Brigadeführer* (brigadier general). Igor-Philip Matic, *Edmund Veessenmayer. Agent und Diplomat der nationalsozialistischen Expansionspolitik* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), 218.
 58. Veessenmayer participated in the preparation of the *Anschluss*—the union of Austria to the German Reich—and in solving the attendant economic problems in 1938. He also played a significant role in establishing Jozef Tiso in Slovakia (resulting in its puppet status in 1939), in creating the Ustaše Greater Croatian state, and in stabilizing the occupation in Serbia in 1941.
 59. Veessenmayer wrote two long memoranda summarizing his visits, dated 30 April and 10 December 1943: Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 104 and no. 110, respectively.
 60. Veessenmayer’s report of 10 December 1943: Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 110.
 61. Matic, *Edmund Veessenmayer*, 231.
 62. Imrédy was the founder of the MMP. Miklós Lackó called MMP “salon fascism.” Miklós Lackó, *Válságok-Választások. Történeti tanulmányok a két háború közötti Magyarországon* [Crises-elections. Historical studies on Hungary between two Wars] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1975), 320–30.

63. In 1939, Imrédy had been forced to resign after his political enemies revealed that he had a Jewish great-grandparent. Péter Sipos, ed., *Imrédy Béla a vádlottak padján* [Béla Imrédy in the dock] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó / Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 1999), 44–45.
64. In September 1941, László Baky, along with thirteen parliamentary representatives, left Ferenc Szálasi's Arrow Cross Party and founded the Hungarian National Socialist Party. In the parliament, he formed a coalition with Imrédy's party. Baky and Imrédy enjoyed German support against Szálasi. Sipos, *Imrédy Béla*, 44–45.
65. László Karsai and Judit Molnár, eds., *A magyar Quisling-kormány: Sztójay Döme és társai a népbíróság előtt* [The Hungarian Quisling government. Döme Sztójay and others before the People's Court] (Budapest: 1956-os KHT, 2004), 60–66.
66. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:484–85.
67. The Pest County decrees deprived Jews of sugar and fat rations; they ordered the seizure of Jewish homes and radios, internment of politically unreliable Jews, the cancellation of business licenses, the purging of Jewish authors from library collections, and other such actions. Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *A végső döntés Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944* [The Final decision. Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944] (Budapest: Jaffa, 2013), 157–58. The most important anti-Jewish decrees are listed in Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:1661–74.
68. Peter R. Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 157; Yaacov Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil* (London: Continuum, 2002), 242–45.
69. According to Veesenmayer, Kaltenbrunner was in Budapest 19–25 March. See Veesenmayer's statement to the Hungarian political police on 16 November 1945, USHMM, RG-39018, Selected records of state security investigations of Hungarian war criminals [ÁBTL-4-1-A-814], 24. Winkelmann remembered that Kaltenbrunner stayed in Budapest until the beginning of April 1944, as he stated on 17 May 1946 in his interrogation by the Hungarian political police, ÁBTL-4-1-A-645/2, 63. Winkelmann and Sztójay remembered that on 19 and 20 March Kaltenbrunner also negotiated about the new Hungarian government at the German Embassy in Budapest. Kaltenbrunner told Sztójay of the German demand for solving the Jewish question, which Sztójay communicated to other members of the prospective government. See Sztójay's statement in his trial before the People's Court on 5 March 1946: Karsai and Molnár, *A magyar Quisling-kormány*, 199, 213; Andor Jaross's statement in Sztójay's trial on 11 March 1946: *ibid.*, 401; and Winkelmann's note for the political police on 14 November 1945: *ibid.*, 818. A note of 31 March 1944 from Ritter to Veesenmayer is a hint of a possible second visit: Ritter wrote that Ribbentrop found out that Kaltenbrunner planned to be in Budapest for the next two weeks, and he requested a confidential report on what Kaltenbrunner was doing in Budapest.

- In particular, Ribbentrop was interested in whether Kaltenbrunner was dealing with the “regulation of the Jewish question” or with other tasks. There is no answering document, however, that would confirm Kaltenbrunner’s presence in Budapest. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 116. See also Black, *Kaltenbrunner*, 157–58.
70. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 129.
 71. Krisztián Ungváry based this number on the phone book of the HSSPF in Budapest, which listed the names and phone numbers of the *Sondereinsatzkommando*, a relatively newly discovered archival source. Krisztián Ungváry, “Master Plan? The Decision-Making Process behind the Deportations,” in Braham and Kovács, *Holocaust in Hungary*, 124.
 72. Thadden was the head of the ministry’s Internal Affairs IIA (Inland IIA) section, who as liaison to the RSHA, dealt with the deportation of Jews. Veessenmayer also forwarded Winkelmann’s summary reports to his superiors. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document nos. 246–89.
 73. László Karsai, “Zsidó hétköznapiak Endre László alispán vármegyéjében 1938–1943” [Jewish daily life in the county of Deputy-Prefect László Endre 1938–1943], in *Háborús hétköznapiak hadszíntéren, hátszágban 1939–1945* [Everyday life in the war theater and on the home front 1939–1945], ed. György Gyarmati and Judit Pihurik (Budapest-Pécs: Magyar Történelmi Társulat: Kronosz: Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára, 2015), 91–98.
 74. The two opposing views were originally represented by Braham and the German authors Christian Gerlach and Götz Aly. Braham, from the first edition of *The Politics of Genocide* to his posthumously published article, insisted on the existence of a “master plan,” worked out by Eichmann, together with Endre and Baký on the Hungarian side. According to Braham, the “master plan” had two phases: the first, from 22 March to 15 May, centered on the appointment of the Sztójay government and encompassed the anti-Jewish decrees and the roundup, concentration, and ghettoization of the Jews. The second phase, from 15 May to 9 July, was the deportation of approximately 440,000 Jews from the provinces. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:535; Randolph L. Braham and Paul Hanebrink, “The Holocaust in Hungary: A Critical Analysis,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 34, no. 1 (2020): 1–17, at 14. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 250, 257, 263, 266, claimed that the RSHA and Eichmann had no concrete plan, but instead that two factors, the German need for labor and the willingness of the Hungarian authorities, led to the total deportation. They also claimed that in May, Hungarian authorities were the driving force behind the acceleration of the deportations. Karsai, who was sharply critical of Gerlach and Aly’s work, agreed that there was no detailed plan before the occupation but rejected the argument that Hungarian officials, mainly Endre, pressured Eichmann and through him the German authorities to speed up the deportations. Karsai, “A holokauszt utolsó fejezete,” 5. Ungváry did not accept the idea of a “master plan”

- and referred to Hans Mommsen's concept of "cumulative radicalization" as the best description of the decision for the deportation in Hungary. According to Ungváry, it was a negotiable German demand but "the resettlement [expulsion] of the Jewish population had been sought uniformly by a majority of Hungary's domestic forces—above all the governing party and the extreme right—ever since 1939." Ungváry, "Master Plan?," 106, 139, 141, 146, at 139.
75. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 246.
 76. Among them were the former minister of internal affairs, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer; his brother, Lieutenant General Lajos Keresztes-Fischer, who was Horthy's military adviser; the chief of the political police, József Sombor-Schweinitzer; Colonel Gyula Kádár, chief of the military intelligence and counterintelligence service; and General István Újszászy, chief of the Center for State Defense in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Former prime ministers István Bethlen and Miklós Kállay went into hiding. Lipót Aschner, Ferenc Chorin, Leó Goldberger, and Móric Kornfeld, leaders of the industrial and financial elite, were arrested along with their family members. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:575–76.
 77. Judit Molnár, "The Foundation and Activities of the Hungarian Jewish Council, March 20–July 7, 1944," *Yad Vashem Studies* 30 (2002): 93–123.
 78. German authorities allowed the publication of just one Jewish newspaper, forcing its editors to change its name from *Magyar Zsidók Lapja* (Newspaper of Hungarian Jews), the name under which it had been published since 1939, to *Magyarországi Zsidók Lapja* (Newspaper of the Jews of Hungary). Its editors had to translate each issue into German for approval before publication.
 79. The unofficial practice was to present draft laws to Horthy before issuance. Horthy waived this in the case of the anti-Jewish decrees.
 80. In case of war or danger of war, Law II of 1939 provided the government with exceptional power, i.e., to govern with decrees. The Sztójay government used this power to issue the anti-Jewish decrees.
 81. Karsai, "A holokausz utolsó fejezete," 4; Karsai and Molnár, *A magyar Quisling-kormány*, 350; Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 150.
 82. See Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:587–91 and vol. 2, appendix 3, for a comprehensive listing of all Hungarian measures against the Jews from April to December 1944. All anti-Jewish decrees, with the exception of the confidential, nonpublic decrees, were published in the *Budapesti Közlöny* (Budapest Gazette).
 83. Ilona Benoschofsky and Elek Karsai (eds.), *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen: dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez* [An indictment of Nazism: Documents on the history of the persecution of Jews in Hungary], Vols. 1–2 (Budapest: A Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselőlete Kiadása, 1958–1960), 1:51.
 84. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:654–55.
 85. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 144. László Baký, in his interrogation by the political police on 25 October 1945, stated that around 7 April 1944, Endre introduced Eichmann as the advisor and liaison of the SS at Himmler's

- order. USHMM, RG-39018, *Selected Records of State Security Investigations of Hungarian War Criminals*, ÁBTL-4.1.A 645, 183.
86. Ferenczy was appointed as liaison to Eichmann around March 28. Judit Molnár, ed., *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban. Ferenczy László csendőr alezredes a népbíróság előtt* [Gendarmerie officer in the Markó Prison. Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy before the People's Court] (Budapest: Scolar-ÁBTL, 2014), 31.
 87. On Ferenczy's participation in this meeting, see Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:646ff.
 88. No minutes of this fateful meeting exists, only a short memorandum that Géza Halász, deputy government commissioner of Carpatho-Ruthenia, who attended the meeting, composed on 27 May, from memory. **(Document 6)**
 89. Of an unknown number of appendixes to this important decree, only three—A, D, and E—survived the war. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 31, 37. Baky signed the decree, as Endre's appointment only took effect on 8 April. It is likely that Endre, Ferenczy, and Eichmann formulated the decree at their meeting on 4 April. Karsai, "A holokauszt utolsó fejezete," 6. Karsai refers to postwar testimonies of Endre and Jaross in László Karsai and Judit Molnár, eds., *Az Endre-Baky-Jaross per* [The Endre-Baky-Jaross trial] (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1994), 140–42.
 90. The Hungarian National Bank forbade all its branches to accept valuables, cash, or financial instruments taken from Jews. It was instead the Central Corporation of Banking Companies (and its branch offices nationwide) where the confiscated money and goods were delivered. Krisztián Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer és antiszemitizmusának mérlege. Diszkrimináció és társadalompolitika Magyarországon 1919–1944* [The Horthy regime and the balance sheet of antisemitism. Discrimination and social policy in Hungary 1919–1944] (Budapest: Jelenkor, 2016), 611, 627.
 91. The area of the army corps corresponded approximately to the operational zones. The two designations were used interchangeably in contemporary documents.
 92. The headquarters of gendarmerie districts, usually located in the major town in the center of the district, are identified in parentheses. It is unclear who designed these zones, or when. The sequence of the ghettoization appeared in Decree 6163/1944 BM res. **(Document 7)**, which differed slightly from the final form; the zones were not yet given numerical designations at this point. For this table, see Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:661.
 93. Braham, 1:666.
 94. For Braham, the decree was part of the "master plan," which launched the concentration and ghettoization in the entire country and foreshadowed the deportation. *Politics of Genocide*, 1:651–53. Gerlach and Aly, who as we have seen rejected the idea of a "master plan," wrote that the "internal logic of the text" of the decree contradicted the assumption of many historians that the decree was already about the deportations. Generally, they underplayed the importance of the decree. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 139. Karsai did not agree

- and pointed out that the decree provided the schedule of the deportations for the entire country. Karsai, “A holokauszt utolsó fejezete,” 6–7. Kádár and Vági compare in their importance the 7 April meeting to the Wannsee Conference, and the Decree 6163/1944 to the protocol of the Wannsee Conference, and they argue that both were the results of decisions previously made in a small circle. Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 170–71. Ungváry considered the decree and the 7 April meeting in the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the first of several phases in the deportation decision. Ungváry, “Master Plan?,” 139–141.
95. This was the number mentioned by Faragho, superintendent of the gendarmerie, in the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 21 June 1944, and confirmed by historical research: Molnár, “Crime and Punishment?,” 65–66.
 96. Gendarmerie District VIII (Kassa) included the Upper Region (Felvidék) and Carpatho-Ruthenia (Kárpátalja), in the northeastern and eastern-most parts of pre-Trianon Hungary (the Habsburg Monarchy), which Hungary reoccupied from Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, with German support.
 97. László Karsai was the first historian to analyze the entire file of the Government Commissioner’s Office. These documents are in the larger collection of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Hungarian National Archives, signature K 774: László Karsai, “Zsidósors Kárpátalján 1944-ben” [Jewish fate in Sub-Carpathia in 1944], *Múlt és Jövő* [Past and future], no. 3 (1991): 60–66. Beside these documents, the collection of the State Archives of the Trans-Carpathian Oblast (Derzhavnyj arkhiv Zakarpats’koi oblasti, DAZO) *filial* in Berehove, Ukraine, has documentation on Ungvár, used by Gyula Kosztyó in his excellent study “Az ungvári zsidóság a vészkorszakban, Gettósítás, deportálás és a zsidó vagyoni sorsa 1944-ben” [Ungvár’s Jews during the Holocaust. Ghettoization, deportation, and the fate of Jewish property, 1944], *Betekintő* [Insight], no. 4 (2016): 1–32.
 98. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:88 (table 3.1). The numbers are based on the 1941 census. The 146,000 included Jews only in the reoccupied regions, and did not include Jews who lived in Hungary and who belonged to the same gendarmerie district (that is, to the first zone of deportation) in towns such as Nyíregyháza, Mátészalka, Kisvárd, and Sátoraljaújhely, and in the surrounding areas. Their number was between 30,000 and 40,000.
 99. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives, MNL OL), K 774 (Documents of the Governor of Carpatho-Ruthenia), 1–131.
 100. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:167–68.
 101. Kosztyó, “Az ungvári zsidóság,” 1. The author cites these numbers from József Kepecs (ed.), *A zsidó lakosság száma településenként 1840–1941* [The size of the Jewish population by location, 1840–1941] (Budapest: KSH, 1993), 33.
 102. Dannecker, as he later insisted, “was only an observer and advisor.” However, when the rumor (soon disproved) arose that a German soldier had been shot in Ungvár, he immediately requested the execution of one hundred prominent Jews.

103. The participants were Major General Zoltán Álgya-Pap, chief of public security in Carpatho-Ruthenia, Police Councilors Arisztid Meskó and Thurzó, Gendarmerie Lieutenant Colonel Sándor Pálffy, the commander of the Ungvár division, and Gendarmerie Captain Arzén Záhonyi, chief of the investigative subdivision.
104. There was a ghetto to be set up in Ilosva as well.
105. Kosztyó, “Az ungvári zsidóság,” 5. The document uses the phrase “public supply districts,” which were the equivalent of city districts.
106. Thurzó only reported on the activity of the police. Since there is no report on the very beginning of the roundup on 20 April, we do not know whether the roundup in the first public supply district was performed by the police, or, as Kosztyó writes, the police were assisted by the gendarmerie.
107. Veesenmayer referred to the first zone of deportation as “Karpatenraum,” Carpathian region.
108. On the same day, Endre also visited Munkács, Beregszász, Nagyszőlős, Huszt, Técső, Aknaszlatina, and Máramarossziget.
109. On 9 May, at the time of Gyurits’s exchange with the mayor, as Gyurits pointed out, more than fourteen days had passed since the Jews were in the collection camps and they were supposed to take only a fourteen-day supply of food.
110. Just before the deportations began in Carpatho-Ruthenia, and probably based on the experiences in that region, Jaross emphasized that the “most stringent saving measures must be enforced” with all the expenditures connected to the concentration of Jews. The expenditures were to be covered by the Hungarian treasury. **(Document 35)**
111. For the last half century, no new documents have come to light on the decision-making process. Braham published the documents that we use in this volume in 1964. György Ránki, in 1968, referred to the same documents as we do today, and concluded that the deportation was decided on 20 April. See his *1944 március 19*. See also, in German translation, György Ránki, *Unternehmen Margarethe. Die deutsche Besetzung Ungarns* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1984), 312–16. Gerlach and Aly introduced the idea that the deportation was decided in a complex and gradual process, in four phases, differentiated by whether German or Hungarian pressure prevailed. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 257–66, on the phases, 264–66. Although the documentary support for their argument is not sufficient, other authors have accepted and made use of the same arguments. Among them are the Hungarian authors Kádár and Vági, who describe the four phases of decision as the German occupation, the ghettoization, the limited deportation, and the final decision on total deportation on 22 April. Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 148, 164, 183, and 188. Ungváry also claims that “the deportations were thus taken at several stages.” Ungváry, “Master Plan?,” 141–44. Regina Fritz holds the same opinion: *VEJ*, 49–50. Karsai has always opposed the phases or stages interpretation for its lack of documentation. Karsai, “A holokauszt utolsó fejezete,” 7.

112. From February 1944, there were meetings and written exchanges between Hitler, Hermann Göring, Albert Speer, the military, and the SS leadership about building underground aircraft factories in the Czech Protectorate that could withstand Allies' aerial attacks (the so-called *Jägerplan*). The goal was to replace some of the huge equipment losses suffered by the Luftwaffe. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:445–47. See more details about the *Jägerplan* in Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 158–75, specifically on requesting Hungarian forced laborers, 160–61, 168–69. Hungarian Jewish forced laborers were supposed to provide the manpower in these underground factories.
113. Express letter from RSHA (signed by Günther, Eichmann's deputy at the RSHA), stamped with Kaltenbrunner's letterhead, to Thadden on 24 April: Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 147. This decision was confirmed on 1 May in a joint meeting of the Security Police, Organization Todt, and the Wehrmacht. Organization Todt had to request Jewish laborers from the SS Economics and Administrative Main Office (SS-WVHA). Veessenmayer's telegram on 8 May 1944 to the foreign ministry: Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 158.
114. Initially, Veessenmayer wrote about deporting “3,000 Jews daily,” a number that was only a quarter of the eventual daily average. The “train conference” of 4–5 May (discussed below) multiplied this figure fourfold.
115. The next day, Thadden sent a copy of Veessenmayer's cable to Eichmann's office at the RSHA. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 146.
116. Szentkút, now Petőfiszállás, is about 120 km south of Budapest. Endre regularly spent weekends there, as he mentioned in his trial before the People's Court: Karsai and Molnár, *Az Endre-Baky-Jaross per*, 57. Kádár and Vági are the only researchers who argue that the “final decision” on deportation of the Jews was made at this evening gathering. They list Eichmann, Winkelmann, Geschke, and Huntsche representing the German side, and Jaross, Baky, and Albert Takáts (the head of Endre's secretariat) on the Hungarian side. They base their conclusion on a 22 April entry in Endre's work calendar that referred to this meeting. The work calendar, as the authors' citations show, contains dates and names of meetings, phone calls, and other daily tasks, but no topics or summaries of them. Any conclusions drawn from these entries are assumptions. Endre's son, Zsigmond, gave a copy of the work calendar to Vági, who has not shared the document with other historians or the public. Thus, the authors' claims about this meeting, and their other references to Endre's work calendar, cannot be independently assessed. See Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 191–95.
117. This interpretation is consistent with Höttl's statement for the Eichmann trial, although Höttl's adversarial relationship with Veessenmayer is reason for caution. Höttl testified that “[i]n the meantime, I have learned that these deportations had been carried out on the basis of an official agreement between the

- German government, represented by its embassy in Budapest, and the Hungarian government, and implemented by the two state secretaries in the Ministry of Internal Affairs” (35). Höttl said that he heard from Baky that “the German Ambassador, Veessenmayer, carried out the crucial negotiations with the Hungarian Minister of Internal Affairs” (40). Höttl’s statement was a response to the judicial assistance request of the District Court of Jerusalem in the State of Israel against Adolf Eichmann. Witness statement for District Court Bad Aussee, Austria, 19–21 June 1961, USHMM RG-14.101M, Records of the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities of the Federal States for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes (B162), reel 446, 1–74.
118. Höttl stated, “In the Hungarian Official Gazette, I could not find any law that somehow could have provided the legal foundation for these deportations. Therefore, I think that no such laws exist at all, and it was only a matter of secret understanding between German and Hungarian government agencies” (p. 36 of his witness statement). On 21 June 1944, in the meeting of the Council of Ministers, Imrédy stated, “I object to the fact that the deportations were based only on a verbal agreement with the Germans and that we have no written agreement.” (**Document 80**; see also **Document 95**)
 119. Meeting of the Council of Ministers on 26 April 1944, agenda item 64. General Imre Ruskiczay-Rüdiger, the permanent deputy of the minister of defense, informed the cabinet of the German demand for labor. USHMM, RG 52.000 (Randolph Braham Collection), fr. 00000168. The formulation of the Hungarian sentence is strange and incorrect: the first part is the indicative mood, the second is in the conditional. The conditional part of the sentence may be an indication of some uncertainty regarding the deportation of family members, or simply a grammatically mismatched sentence construction.
 120. The remaining Jews in Nagykanizsa—approximately 1,800 to 2,000—were deported on 17 May. On 12 May, the Jewish Council in Budapest had noted that a group of Jews from the collection camp in Barcs was transferred to Kaposvár; the rest, around 900, were deported on 27 May. On 28 May, approximately 5,200 Jews were deported from Baja, where Hungarian gendarmes and police had concentrated them from Szeged and Szabadka. On Nagykanizsa: the People’s Court trial of Dr. Lajos Hegyi (former deputy mayor of Nagykanizsa), Hungarian National Archives—Zala County (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár—Zala Megyei Levéltára, MNL ZML), Nb. 41/1946/15. On Barcs: the People’s Court trial of László Hajnácskőy (former commander of Gendarmerie District IV), Historical Archives of the State Security Services (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, ÁBTL), V-146147, Interrogation of László Hajnácskőy, 12 November 1945. On Baja: Judit Molnár, “Zsidótlanítás a déli határsávban 1944–ben” [De-Jewification in the Southern Border Zone in 1944], in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról* [Holocaust studies], vol. 8, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 2017), 31–34.

121. The only contemporary source is a summary report of 30 May 1944. (**Document 69**)
122. Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), entry for 2 May 1944.
123. Endre's survey trip can be reconstructed on the basis of his work calendar, the contemporary press, and his postwar trial before the People's Court; he visited thirty-four ghettos and collection camps. Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 195–204; Karsai and Molnár, *Az Endre-Baky-Jaross per*, 488. Gerlach and Aly concluded that the deportations seemed to have been speeded up due to the pressure of Hungarian officials. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 257, 264–66.
124. On 2 May, Thadden informed the German Embassy in Bratislava, Slovakia, that the train conference was scheduled for those dates and that most of the trains would probably travel through Slovakia. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 151.
125. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:769–70.
126. Judit Molnár, "A zsidók utazásának korlátozásától korlátlan deportálásukig" [From the restriction on travel to the unlimited deportation of the Jews], *Századok* 4 (2014): 1355–63.
127. Available in various editions and languages, the so-called *Auschwitz Album* contains about two hundred photos taken inside Auschwitz-Birkenau during the Hungarian operation. Lili Jacob (born Meier), who appears in one of the album photos, found the collection at the end of the war and donated it to Yad Vashem in 1980. The most recent critical edition is: Tal Bruttman, Stefan Hördler, and Christoph Kreutzmüller, eds., *Die fotografische Inszenierung des Verbrechens. Ein Album aus Auschwitz. Bildanalyse des Lili-Jacob-Albums* (Darmstadt: wbg Academic, 2019).
128. See also Braham, *Documentary Account*, document nos. 152 and 154.
129. According to the "Košice List," the first deportation train had already crossed the Hungarian border on 14 May. See appendix 1; the data is also reproduced in Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1700–1705
130. The figure 325,000 is first mentioned by Veessenmayer in his 11 May 1944 cable. (**Document 50**) We do not know the basis for this number, but German and Hungarian authorities repeatedly asserted that there were around 300,000 Jews in the Carpathian region (in which they included northern Transylvania). Ferenczy, after the deportations were completed in this area, submitted the figure of 275,415 Jews removed. (**Document 59**)
131. Ferenczy was promoted to gendarmerie lieutenant colonel in October 1942; between July 1942 and January 1944, he served at the Central Investigative Command in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 17, 101–3. See also appendix 3.
132. Ferenczy's letter of appointment has not been located. Ferenczy himself provided the 28 March date in his 9 November 1945 written statement while in pretrial confinement. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 31, 103.

Gendarmes, Bureaucrats, and Jews

A Documentary History of the Destruction of Hungary's Jews, Spring-Summer 1944

Edited by Judit Fejes Schulmann, David Alan Rich, and Judit Molnár

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133. There is no documentary evidence of such a request. At Ferenczy's trial in 1946, Faragho stated that the Germans had requested Ferenczy as liaison and referred to Baky's recommendation in their request. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 190–91.
134. Eichmann deployed eight officers and forty SS men to the ten largest towns of Carpatho-Ruthenia to supervise the concentration and ghettoization process. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 279.
135. Signs of Endre's intervention are visible in some of Ferenczy's reports: Endre underlined, usually in red, and wrote his own opinions, questions, and instructions on the reports.
136. After 9 May, the distribution list also included Baky's name; between 9 May and 29 June, the name of Béla Ricsóy-Uhlarik, the government commissioner of Transylvania, also appeared.
137. We know that Ferenczy was in Munkács on 12 April, because on that day he met with Géza Halász. On 15 April, when Halász tried to meet him again, he was in Budapest. (**Documents 10, 12**)
138. The daily gendarme reports, filed in duplicate, were, with very few exceptions, never found in Hungarian archives. Such exceptions are the reports from the city of Szolnok, published in this volume (**Documents 68A–K**). Historians, including us, who tried to establish the fate of these invaluable sources have been unsuccessful. Ferenczy's aide, Captain Lulay, compiled the daily accounts that the gendarmerie posts submitted, and Ferenczy signed the final versions of Lulay's compilations. Ferenczy's and Lulay's postwar statements to the political police, 9 November 1945 and 13 November 1945, respectively: Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 92–93, 105.
139. On 8 June 1944, after the deportations were completed in Zones I and II (Gendarmerie Districts VIII, IX, and X), Ferenczy reported that 275,415 Jews were deported. (**Document 59**)
140. These were recorded as the "remarks of [Gendarmerie] Captain Dr. Uray." The anonymous note taker had recorded the wrong name: Dr. Lulay, Ferenczy's aide, made these remarks.
141. The numbers of Jews deported from Ungvár on these days were respectively 3,455; 3,335; 3,334; 2,988; and 3,056. See appendixes 1 and 2, the Košice and Glazer lists; also, Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:1700–1705.
142. Pohl also wrote that Organization Todt had agreed with the deployment of women at construction work. Pohl's telegram to Himmler on 24 May 1944, Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 163.
143. Himmler's answer to Pohl, 27 May 1944, Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 167.
144. As we already indicated, we do not find support for the Gerlach-Aly argument that Hungarian authorities agreed to the deportations in four phases. They argue that the Hungarian government initially, on 13 April, agreed only to the deportation of a larger contingent of Jewish laborers, and then, on 23 April, to

- the deportation of the Jews from the military operational zones and reoccupied regions, followed, on 2 May, to speeding up the deportations, and finally, in late May, to the deportation of the Jews from the interior of the country, that is, Trianon Hungary, including Budapest. Gerlach and Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel*, 265–66. Decree 6163/1944 (**Document 7**) issued on 7 April 1944 on “cleansing” the country in its entirety is, however, a strong indication of the Hungarian government’s intention of deportation from the very beginning.
145. No document of the 3 June 1944 meeting survived.
 146. See also Thadden’s memo of 26 May 1944 (**Document 71**), in which he mentions that the deportation in the rest of Hungary would be organized differently than in Carpatho-Ruthenia and northern Transylvania.
 147. Strasshof was close to Vienna, Austria, which became (as *Ostmark*) part of the Greater German Reich after the *Anschluss* on 12 March 1938. Three recent publications explore what happened to the Jews who were deported to Auschwitz from Szeged, Szolnok, and Debrecen. They are edited by Kinga Frojimovics and Judit Molnár. See *Szeged—Strasshof—Szeged. Tények és emlékek a Bécsben és környékén “jégre tett” Szegedről deportáltakról. 1944–1947* [Szeged—Strasshof—Szeged. Facts and memories of the deportees of Szeged “put on ice” in and around Vienna. 1944–1947], *Szolnok—Strasshof—Szolnok. Tények és emlékek a Bécsben és környékén “jégre tett” Szolnokról deportáltakról. 1944–1948* [Szolnok—Strasshof—Szolnok. Facts and memories of the deportees of Szolnok “put on ice” in and around Vienna. 1944–1948], and *Debrecen—Strasshof—Debrecen. Tények és emlékek a Bécsben és környékén “jégre tett” Debrecenből deportáltakról, 1944–1948* [Debrecen—Strasshof—Debrecen. Facts and memories of the deportees from Debrecen “put on ice” in and around Vienna, 1944–1948] (Szeged: SZTE ÁJTK Politológia Tanszék—Szegedi Magyar–Izraeli Baráti Társaság, 2021, 2022, and 2024 respectively).
 148. The Relief and Rescue Committee was also called Vaadah, an abbreviation of the Hebrew *Vaadat ha’ Ezra ve’ha’Hatzalah*. Kasztner opened negotiations to rescue 100,000 Hungarian Jews. Eichmann counter-offered with 30,000 Jews: 15,000 from the countryside and 15,000 from Budapest. László Karsai and Judit Molnár, eds., *The Kasztner Report: The Report of the Budapest Jewish Rescue Committee 1942–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013), 146–47.
 149. Kasztner, however, was not aware of this while negotiating with Eichmann. Even after the war, Kasztner believed that 16,000–18,000 Jews escaped death at Auschwitz as a result of his bargaining with Eichmann. Karsai and Molnár, *Kasztner Report*, 27–28.
 150. Judit Molnár, “Véletlenek: 15 ezer főnyi ‘munkaerő-szállítmány’ sorsa 1944 júniusában” [Coincidences: The fate of the “labor transport” of fifteen thousand in June 1944], in Frojimovics and Molnár, *Szeged—Strasshof—Szeged*, 27–37.
 151. This is the only wartime document from the embarkation phase of the Strasshof deportations. The reports of Szolnok are also unique for another reason:

- they continue over an eleven-day period and demonstrate how the local gendarmes informed Ferenczy.
152. The Kasztner–Eichmann agreement occurred during the days when the last trains from the third zone of deportations left the country. Kasztner asked for 15,000 Jews to be selected from the collection camps of the fourth zone—Debrecen, Kecskemét, Szeged, and Szolnok. By coincidence, however, the train from Kecskemét was routed to Auschwitz. It is probably due to this mistake that the train transporting 6,000 Jews from Szeged and Bácsalmás was divided into two parts, and one proceeded to Strasshof to meet the agreed-upon number. Molnár, “Véletlenek,” 29–32.
 153. According to Róbert Pap, president of the Jewish Community of Szeged, 75 percent of the Jews deported from Szeged to Strasshof returned after the war. Frojimovics and Molnár, *Szeged—Strasshof—Szeged*, 120. Regarding other towns and cities, there are no reliable figures. Some survivors estimate that 50–80 percent of the Strasshof deportees returned after the war. Judit Molnár, *Csendőrök, hivatalnokok, zsidók: válogatott tanulmányok a magyar holokauszt történetéből* [Gendarmes, officials, Jews. Selected studies from the history of the Hungarian Holocaust] (Szeged: Szegedi Zsidó Hitközség, 2000), 197.
 154. Edit Csillag, Statement protocol No. 3628, 1 June 1945, contains her notes about the number of Jews registered in Strasshof: 15,011, including 2,567 from Szolnok, 6,641 from Debrecen, and 564 from Baja. She was a reliable source because she worked in the distribution office (thanks to her excellent command of the German language), where she prepared and filed index cards of the arriving deportees. Her statement is in the collection *Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság* (National Committee for the Care of Deportees) (1945–1948), stored in the Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár, Budapest. A total of 3,666 such statement protocols exist, taken in 1945–1946 from approximately 5,000 survivors (individually and in groups).
 155. Karsai and Molnár, *Kasztner Report*, 163–65. On 21 August 1944, a group of 318 Jews were transported to Switzerland, later followed by 1,368 on 6–7 December. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:1270–1271. The Kasztner initiative had an extensive literature; see bibliography.
 156. Notes of the meeting have never been found. Postwar statements of Endre and Baký are in Karsai and Molnár, *Az Endre-Baký-Jaross per*, 52–53, 92, 95–96.
 157. This occurred when Baký attempted to carry out the deportations of the Budapest Jews, utilizing the several thousand gendarmes called into the city (see below). Some of these gendarmerie units participated in the Budapest area deportations, which explains the simultaneous action in the two zones and the speed with which it was carried out.
 158. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1:736–737, and 741.
 159. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 40.

160. On the conditions, see Judit Molnár, “Zsidók és csendőrök a gettókban, gyűjtőtáborokban 1944–ben” [Jews and gendarmes in the ghettos and collection camps in 1944], in *Háborús hétköznapiak hadszíntéren, hátszágban 1939–1945*, ed. Gyarmati and Pihurik, op. cit., 229–42. See also the Foreword to this volume by Peter R. Black.
161. On 8 May 1944, a meeting took place among the Security Police, Organization Todt, and the Wehrmacht. Veessenmayer noted that they planned to raise the number of Jewish forced labor companies in Hungary from 210 to 575, which would result in exempting 150,000 Jewish laborers from the deportations. Braham, *Documentary Account*, document no. 158, 1:372.
162. According to the agreement between the SS and the Weiss, Chorin, Kornfeld, and Mauthner families, they turned over 51 percent of their industrial and financial assets—the “Aryan” assets—to the SS. For the purpose of the transaction, they created a new holding company for these assets, which was to be administered in trusteeship for twenty-five years by the SS. It was a “gentleman’s agreement” between SS *Standartenführer* (Colonel) Kurt Becher and Ferenc Chorin. They signed the agreement on 17 May 1944. In exchange, forty-two members of these families were allowed to leave Hungary for Portugal and Switzerland, taking their personal valuables and cash. Nine family members were detained as hostages in Vienna. Practically and legally, the SS took over the management of the armament production of the Manfréd Weiss Works in Csepel. Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Self-Financing Genocide: The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of the Hungarian Jews* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 205–7.
163. Szinai and Szűcs, *Confidential Papers*, 454–57 (draft letter to Hitler, 6 June 1944). On 6 June, Sztójay and Chief of Staff János Vörös visited Hitler in Salzburg and raised this issue with him. The timing of the meeting was unfortunate as it coincided with the Allied landings in Normandy. In his letter to Hitler, Horthy argued that they agreed in Klessheim that Hitler would respect Hungary’s sovereignty if the regent appointed a government that Hitler trusted. Horthy emphasized that while Hungary put its army and economy at Germany’s disposal, the Gestapo and SS nevertheless behaved as they would in an enemy country, imprisoning leading politicians. Horthy did not mention the Jewish question in his letter. The record of the Hitler-Sztójay meeting did not survive the war.
164. The social policy department of the municipality of Budapest issued the order after completing the registration of apartments and houses owned by Jews. The ghettoization of Budapest became a hotly contested issue, so that initially the Jewish population of the city had to move to buildings marked with yellow stars in each district, rather than to a ghetto. They were designated as “Yellow Star Houses.” There were rumors (fed by the Jewish Council as well) that Allied bombardment would skirt the ghetto and target Christian areas, so no ghetto

- was set up. There were approximately 2,000 buildings designated for 200,000 to 220,000 Jews. The forced moves caused great upheaval in the entire city, adding to Horthy's and the government's dilemma of how to deal with the Budapest Jews. The Jews had to register in their new residences; movement outside their residences was severely restricted, limited initially to three and then to six hours a day. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:992–999. See also the website showing the distribution of Budapest's Jewish houses during the 1944 operation, created by Csillagos Házak 1944–2014: www.yellowstarhouses.org (accessed 10 June 2024). See also "Holocaust Geographies: Mapping Mobility in the Budapest Ghetto," the Spatial History Project created by Tim Cole, Alberto Giordano, and Erik Steiner (Stanford/CESTA). The final GIS product, although now inaccessible on Stanford's lab page, may be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dW7_TQU7XS4 (posted 11 February 2015).
165. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:959–61.
 166. Horthy probably drafted the letter in early June. Veesenmayer's report is the only indication that it reached Sztójay before 21 June. Judging from Veesenmayer's information and the 21 June meeting of the Council of Ministers, the final letter must have been close to the surviving draft. Szinai and Szűcs, *Confidential Papers*, 450–53.
 167. Endre's written report was attached to the minutes. Baky's written report was not found, but a summary of his oral presentation is part of the minutes.
 168. The deportations were never completed in those countries. See Peter Black's Forward, above, for discussion.
 169. Crown Councils were usually meetings between Horthy and members of the cabinet on special occasions and in crisis situations. No record of this Crown Council exists. The agenda, prepared by Gyula Ambrózy, the head of Horthy's Cabinet Office, is the only contemporary source. Postwar trial statements of the participants confirmed the agenda. Elek Karsai (ed.). *Vádirat a nácizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez* [An indictment of Nazism: Documents on the history of the persecution of Jews in Hungary], Vol. 3 (Budapest: A Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselte Kiadása, 1967), 3:3–6.
 170. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:1019.
 171. Minutes of the Council of Ministers, 12 July 1944, in Karsai, *Vádirat a nácizmus ellen*, 3:158–60.
 172. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:906. Also, Ferenczy's statement to the Hungarian political police, 9 November 1945: Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt*, 111–12.
 173. In June, there were exchanges between Paul Schmidt (head of the propaganda department in the German foreign ministry), Thadden, and Veesenmayer about the planned "large operation" in Budapest. The exchanges weighed whether a well-planned propaganda campaign would be needed to distract international attention from the operation, and whether it ought to be timed immediately

- before the Allied invasion, in the expectation that the Allied invasion would dominate foreign news coverage. Veessenmayer, who was afraid of press leaks, strongly advised against propaganda measures. See the diplomatic cables from Berlin on 27 May and 6 June, and from Veessenmayer to the foreign ministry on 8 June: Braham, *Documentary Account*, document nos. 168, 171, 172, and 173.
174. There were air raids on 27 and 30 June, and an especially heavy raid on 2 July. The Galánta Training Battalion was hit while in the railway station in Budapest.
 175. There is no contemporary Hungarian documentation to clarify what happened—who persuaded Horthy that a coup was imminent and why he believed the information. On 25 October 1945, in a postwar interrogation, Baky told the political police that he never considered a coup against Horthy, and that it was merely a rumor that he tried to dispel by meeting Horthy, but that he (Baky) was not granted an audience. Baky also said that he had ordered the two gendarmerie battalions to Budapest “for the impending implementation of the de-Jewification measures,” under the pretext of the flag award ceremony. USHMM RG-39.018 (State security investigations of Hungarian war criminals), ÁBTL-4.1.-A 814/1, 187. On 6 and 8 July 1944, Veessenmayer reported that the coup attempt was only gossip, even though Horthy believed that Baky or Szálasi was trying to oust him. See **Documents 92, 93**. See also Ungváry, *Horthy Miklós*, 187–96. Also of relevance are the People’s Court trials of István Ládai and Tibor Paksy-Kiss in: Budapest Municipal Archives, BFL Nb 4995/1946 and Nb 5045/1945.
 176. Horthy did not agree to the deportation of the forced laborers.
 177. Veessenmayer was apparently concerned that the SS would intervene. He found it necessary to reassure Ribbentrop that he (Veessenmayer) held “all strings firmly in hand” (*Drähte fest in der Hand*); and he argued that any German intervention would be considered a sign of weakness, not of strength. He also emphasized that SS units could be used somewhere else, as it was not necessary to deploy them in Hungary, even if military or police circles were suggesting it. (**Document 94**)
 178. On 26 July 1944, the last entry in the *Auschwitz Chronicle* possibly refers to the Sárvár transport: “800 female Jews and 500 male Jews who arrive in RSHA transports from Hungary are transferred from Auschwitz II to D. They are housed in Kaufering auxiliary camp” (671).
 179. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:1039. Horthy asked Lajos Szász, the minister of industry, to assume the duties of minister of commerce and transportation in the place of Kunder.
 180. Jungerth-Arnóthy proposed agreeing to the deportation of 50,000–60,000 Jews from Budapest who were unable to prove Hungarian citizenship and whose ancestors were not born in Hungary. No other Jews were to be deported, all exemptions and rescue missions were to be respected and fulfilled, and Hungary

- was to request the withdrawal of German security services. Jungerth-Arnóthy's proposal was put in the form of a memorandum to be forwarded to the German embassy. We do not know whether the proposal was, indeed, given to Veessenmayer. Karsai, *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen*, 3:374–75, 377–79.
181. On the rescue efforts of the Swiss and Swedish embassies: Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 2:1425–36.
 182. Grell forwarded Eichmann's information to the foreign ministry. By this date, 19 August, the German Embassy had not yet received any official Hungarian communication. The conversion of Jews was legally valid if it had occurred before 1 January 1941. (**Document 97**)
 183. The document is an undated draft in both German and Hungarian, prepared in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The date "23 August 1944" seen on the document is the date when it arrived in Horthy's cabinet office. Karsai, *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen*, 3:451–53.
 184. Bonczos informed Veessenmayer of Horthy's decision to stop the deportations. He did not provide an explanation for the policy change but merely referred to higher orders.
 185. After an unsuccessful attempt to sign an armistice with the Soviet Union, on 16 October German intervention forced Horthy to resign and cede power to Ferenc Szálasi and his Arrow Cross Party.