It happened seventy years ago, in Hungary

Ça s'est passé il y a 70 ans en Hongrie

Het gebeurde zeventig jaar geleden in Hongarije

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It happened seventy years ago, in Hungary

At the beginning of the 1940s, the policies of the Hungarian aristocracy could best be described as those of a “reluctant follower”. Hungarian authorities dragged their feet when carrying out their duties to their German ally. Whenever they could, they engaged in sabotage: they falsified reports on agricultural yields and industrial production. Even at the height of Hitler’s successful campaigns of aggression, Hungarian authorities consistently helped and sheltered small groups of refugees (Austrians, Poles and Slovaks) fleeing to Hungary from the terrors of National Socialism, as well as escapees from prisoner of war camps.

At the same time, the government of Miklós Kállay also carried out some of the wishes of the allied power. The passing of anti-Jewish laws, anti-democratic policies and the acceptance of various demands paved the way for the far right, helped speed up the moral degradation of the Hungarian middle class, and contributed to a political-ethical environment, including within the administration, which led to mass deportations.

The German occupation of the Kingdom of Hungary on 19 March 1944 represented a fate-changing event on the road to the disaster of the Holocaust. The rapid invasion by the Wehrmacht and its accompanying commandos met no resistance, as the now-occupied ally turned out to be easy prey. Despite all of the Kállay government’s maneuvering, the conservative political and economic leadership was a failure. It too suffered losses.

Of the 14.5 million people living in Hungary, the majority of the 825,000 Jews were law-abiding and loyal Hungarians, and proud of it. They were well assimilated, and many saw themselves as Hungarians of Israelite confession. Despite their increasing awareness of the eradication of European Jewry, they felt little sense of danger, as they trusted in the law and in Regent Miklós Horthy. Most of them were wiped out on the eve of the allied victory against Hitler. It was during these months that the long hidden secrets of the industrial genocide became known to the leaders of the great powers, to the western public and also to the Hungarian government and Jewish leaders.

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– Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The mass murder of Hungarian Jews represents one aspect of the 20th century’s greatest crime, the *Endlösung*. The “final solution to the Jewish question” was planned within the atmosphere created by the racial beliefs propagated and reinforced by Hitlerian Germany. It was carried out by terror squads (SS, SD, and Gestapo units) most often aided by collaborators and willing local informants. They were able to do so because the civilized world remained broadly passive in the face of the liquidation of European Jewry.

Historians agree that Berlin’s decision to occupy the Kingdom of Hungary was primarily made on military grounds. Hitler and Nazi Germany decision-makers were aware of the repeated attempts by the Kállay government to step out of the increasingly costly war and the alliance with the axis powers. The utter defeat of the second Hungarian army in Voronezh and the increasing proximity of the battle lines served as strong incentives for obtaining a truce as early as possible.

Without the unexpected German occupation, Hungary’s Jews would most likely have survived the war. They had already sustained losses: nearly 20,000 foreign Jews living in Hungary had been murdered in 1941 near the Podolian town of Kamenec-Podilskyi and in the southern territories [today northern Serbia, TN] in January 1942.¹ Over 40,000 more Hungarian Jewish men lost their lives – directly or indirectly – through service in the Defense Ministry’s auxiliary military reserves.

Hungary and its military worked against their own best interests through (domestic) forced labour and (foreign) military labour camps. There is no truth in the suggestion that these were used as moving death camps. However, it is undeniable that

(1) Following Hungary’s declaration of war, so-called “foreigner measures” were used to deport captured Jewish families and groups over the Eastern border, where German commandos murdered them in August 1941. Nearly a thousand Jews were killed during Hungarian National Guard raids in January of 1942 in the new territories (modern-day Novi Sad).

(2) Veessenmayer (1904–1977), promoted to *SS-Brigadeführer* (brigadier general) on 15 March 1944, was an experienced foreign affairs official, as well as a devout believer in National Socialism. He had previously carried out secret missions in the Balkans and in Budapest. In his 10 December 1943 report, highly critical of Hungarians, he declared that the “so-called Hungarian nation [...] is unfit for statehood, and will remain so in the future”. He underscored that as far as the future of Hungary was concerned, such crassness cannot be allowed, the Empire “could not abide such a nest of saboteurs”. He headed the political apparatus of the German occupiers until the end of March 1945. He was condemned to 20 years in prison after the war, but released in December 1951.

(3) Döme Sztójay (1883-1946) was infantry officer, from 1 November 1935 lieutenant general, from 1940 intelligence advisor to the Hungarian crown. In December 1935 he became Hungarian ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary in Berlin. His activities led many to consider him more the representative of German interests in Budapest. Following the occupation, he obtained the combined responsibilities of Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister thanks to his strong German connections. In March 1945 he escaped to Germany, but was captured by American authorities who sent him back to Hungary. In March 1946 he was convicted by the People's Court and put to death by a firing squad in Budapest.

(4) Winkelmann's orders were carried out by eight operational units. Following initial plans, they settled in what the Germans saw as Hungary's important cities. The security police (*Sipo*) units consisted of two to three hundred soldiers. Their power went beyond this figure, as they could rely on a vast network of informers for their work. These informers were provided for through Hungarian German (German-held) firms, offices and a number shipping firms.

for the first time in Hungarian history, the army conscripted and sent men to the front in large part so that they would die while in service. (Many well-known Hungarian Jewish reporters and academics were called in for forced labour – through lists, announcements and by name – to be sent to the theatre of operations or to the front lines, where the military would be “rid” of them.)

Following the German occupation, the servility of Regent Horthy, the new government and the administration became the other ingredient of the Jewish tragedy. If the government had not handed over control of the police, the National Guard and the civil service to Adolf Eichmann's handful of special troops, his program of genocide would not have been carried out in Hungary.

The occupation created new opportunities for those who wanted to get rid of the Jews. Many people eagerly met German demands. The most dramatic events of the Holocaust in 1944 were possible due to the presence of two factors: the German occupation, and the ready collaboration of the state, whose thoughts and actions were shaped by discriminatory Jewish laws built on decades of political anti-Semitism.

Regent Miklós Horthy gave in to Hitler, an experienced blackmailer. During the preceding discussions, he formally refused the notion of a German occupation of Hungary, but accepted and insured that he would keep his position and powers as head of state. Miklós Kállay and his government resigned. Kállay – seen as and called a traitor by the Germans – sought shelter at the residence of the Turkish ambassador, in Buda.

The political, economic and military consequences were catastrophic. The Gestapo began to make arrests and take hostages. At the same time, Dr. Edmund Veessenmayer², the powerful representative and ambassador of the Great German Empire in Hungary, spent days negotiating in defense of the empire's interests. He sought the creation of “a national government under German protection”. Hitler's stand-in resorted to terror and repression tactics, but to achieve his goals he also played at diplomacy with his Hungarian counterparts. His work was made easier by the newly appointed pro-German administration's enthusiasm.

The German occupation led to Hungary's complete economic exploitation. This happened in parallel to the application of the “final solution” to the Jewish question in Hungary, in regard to which Horthy gave the Döme Sztójay³ government free rein. SS, police and “special” units under the command of the Security Services (*Sicherheitsdienst*, *SD*) marched into Hungary. They arrived in Task forces (*Ein-satzgruppe*), led by *SS-Obergruppenführer* (lieutenant general) Otto Winkelmann,⁴ general of the Waffen-SS.

Winkelmann followed the orders of the supreme leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler. One of his tasks was to fight against communists and their allies and eliminate anti-German groups such as Polish soldier's organisations. He was also responsible for the deportation of Jews. Due to this, he was the superior of *SS-Obersturmbannführer* (lieutenant colonel) Adolf Eichmann,⁵ head of the special anti-Jewish task force (*Sonderkommando* or *Judenkommando*), though he did not keep a close watch on his activities.

In most Hungarian settlements, the SD or the Gestapo was in charge of handing out German instructions. The Germans were experienced in taking hostages and using them for intimidation. In Budapest and in western and southern Hungary, they used lists of names. They immediately took over all policing activities in Budapest. The twenty-eight members of the upper and lower houses of parliament, along with nearly fifty of the more famous Hungarian personalities were taken into custody when they marched into the country.⁶

In the week following the occupation, in order to intimidate the population, the Germans arrested some ten thousand people across the country, including 3,076 Jews.⁷ All of this was met with indifference. The occupiers could do no wrong. The military and the officers put up passively with the humiliating occupation and its consequences. Most behaved as if nothing had happened. Meanwhile, German security teams were busy. With tireless efficiency, they ground up any real or perceived enemy of the empire.⁸

Eichmann's staff began the “Hungarian action” (*Ungarnaktion*) as usual, launching the genocidal “final solution” (*Endlösung*) Hungarian chapter. Adolf Eichmann was determined that he would carry out the “re-settlement” of Hungary's Jews to the empire as quickly and brutally as possible, avoiding a second Warsaw revolt. The officers of his 120 member task force (Hermann Krumei, Dr. Otto Hunsche, Dieter Wisliceny, Franz Novak and Theodor Dannecker were especially busy) said after the war, in defense of their part, that they were brought merely as “advisors”. In fact, their task was to carry off the last relatively unscathed group of Jews, those in Hungary. Eichmann used the tools he had prepared during his previous “anti-Jewish” actions. These included threats and promises to Jewish leaders, and alternating intimidation and reassurance.

By order of the deportation task force, an eight member Jewish Council was formed in Budapest on 20 March. Its leader was Samu Stern. With his trusted followers, Ernő Pető and Károly Wilhelm, he served the Germans while playing for time. The measures assigned to the council by the Germans limited communication, necessary for self-defence, between Jewish communities in and outside of the capital. Nearly three-quarters of the 800,000 Hungarian Jews were isolated. As they did before, they continued to trust in Hungarian “law”.

From 5 April, Hungarian citizens considered Jews were required to wear a yellow star of David on their outer clothing. Across the country, it became common for local Jewish Councils to painfully carry out the inhuman orders of the occupiers.⁹ On 13 April, Sztójay and Veessenmayer, who kept track of and was trying to speed up the deportation, agreed that Hungary would hand over “at least 50,000 Jewish workers” to the empire by the end of the month.¹⁰ They agreed on a more extensive call for Jewish men between ages 36 and 48, and on increasing the number of Jews in forced labour units from 100,000 to 150,000. As it later turned out, being called in for unarmed forced military labour by a number of Hungarian military officers meant temporary protection from deportation for Jewish men.

The offensive against Hungarians considered to be ethnic Jews – systematically

(5) Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) was one of the authors of the SS Jewish policy from 1935 and was in charge of its implementation. From 1939 he headed section IV. B. 4. (Jewish matters) of the Gestapo. In October 1941 he became *SS-Obersturmbannführer*. On 20 January 1942, he wrote the minutes at the Berlin/Wannsee conference planning the solution to the Jewish question, focusing on the eradication of Europe's 11 million Jews. Following the occupation of Hungary, he personally oversaw the deportation of Jews. In late August 1944 he organised the evacuation of Romanian and Serbian Jews. Following the Szálasi putsch, he returned to Hungary and oversaw the deportation – mainly on foot – of the Jews living in the capital. After the war he fled Argentina, where he was captured in 1960 by Israeli secret agents. In May 1962, after being tried by a Jerusalem court, he was executed.

(6) The resistance shown by the representative Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky to his arrest was an exception. He was carried away from his Buda apartment, wounded, after his gun ran out of ammunition. He was imprisoned in the Gestapo's jail until the beginning of October.

(7) *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, volume 1, Frankfurt am Main, 1961, 189.

(8) The first groups of Hungarian captives were carried away by train, and sometimes by truck. Later on, it was mainly the Budapest-based German Police Prison which sent them to the Viennese police prison. The first transport left the eastern train station [Keleti, TN] on 26 March. The passengers included Ferenc Chorin, baron Pál Kornfeld, Leó Budai Goldberger, Lipót Aschner (a wealthy banker), general Rudolf Andorka, Lipót Baranyai (the president of the Hungarian national bank), Dezső Laky (a university teacher and former minister), colonel Géza Lenkey, representative György Perlaky, representative Lajos Szentiványi,

Dr. Iván Lajos (a teacher from Pécs), György Parragi (a journalist).

(9) The Hungarian administration, following “German advice”, first implemented large-scale segregation of Jewish populations in Transcarpathia. On 8 April in Munkács, the office of the Jewish Council announced that in the future, “all instructions would be received through the Council” and reassured everyone that there was “no cause for unrest”. It precisely passed on the German’s deceitful promises, because “if all Jews follow our instructions, no one will get hurt”, and everyone should remember that “only by precisely following our instructions can you avoid unpleasantness for yourself and for the community”. In reality, National Guard investigators ruthlessly tortured people in an effort to find “Jewish treasures”, using midwives to search women. Women’s screams could be heard in the ghetto every hour, upsetting many of the locals.

(10) Braham, Randolph L., *The Destruction of Hungarian Jewry*, vol. 1, New York, 1963, 343; 354.

(11) *Ibid.*, 355.

denied by SD officers and the Hungarian government – quickly spread. Many captives were kept in prison camps in Bácska-Topolya, Kistarcsa, Csepel, Nagykanizsa and Sárvár. In rural areas, German officers forced Jewish communities to pay large “guarantees”. They used the tens of thousands of extorted pengös towards their own ends.

The Budapest Jewish Council pretended not to see the profound changes taking place, and the dark clouds hanging over Jewish communities in eastern Hungary and in Transcarpathia. It called on its members to “precisely follow” its demands. On 16 April, another major effort was made to segregate the Jews near Munkács by forcing them into a ghetto. The government’s decision on “Jewish re-settlement” into ghettos came into force on 28 April. At the time of the planned, disguised operation, the SS’s involvement in deportations, unhampered by opposition, played into Germans hands.

The reports sent to Berlin from the German embassy in Budapest contain the compiled figures for individual arrests and the 16 April ghettoization of Jews.

Table 1

Day	Number of individual Jews arrested	Reported Jews in ghettos
1	3,441	–
15	6,461	–
18	7,289	Unknown
20	7,493	38,000
21	7,580	100,038
24	7,802	135,000
26	8,046	140,000
27	8,142	194,000
28	8,225	194,000

German security services chose the most effective solutions available. On 22 April, Veessenmayer reported to Berlin that he had assigned a German “expert advisor” to work with under-secretary László Endre on the implementation of anti-Jewish measures.¹¹ The next day, he specified that the destination for the deportation of Jews was Auschwitz. Meanwhile, Eichmann’s special SS task force was working on the deportation schedule. An agreement was reached with railway companies involved on 4 and 5 May in Vienna regarding the number of cattle trucks and the train schedules.

The distribution of the tasks became clear: with the approval of the interior minister, Andor Jaross, under-secretary Endre gave a series of orders based on German interests to Hungarian civil servants. Retired National Guard Major László

Baky, political under-secretary, made sure there was enough manpower available (the National Guard in rural areas, the police and civil city staff in urban areas). Everyone did their job. The almost daily new anti-Jewish measures were mostly implemented smoothly.¹²

National Guard Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy was one of the most active players in the deportation. He was the liaison officer between the Germans and the National Guard units ordered to assist in the deportation of Jews. Thanks to German support, chief inspector Péter Hain was promoted to be in charge of a politically independent secret agency. Many people referred to this State Security Service as the Hungarian Gestapo.

The German occupation regularly made promises and lied. They always kept their real intentions hidden. Nevertheless, many people must have either known or suspected the true situation. From the confidential files of Jean de Bavier, the representative of the Swiss Red Cross:

On 13 May, one day before I was to leave Budapest, the Jewish community informed me railway officials were going to be meeting on the 15th and the 16th. The subject will be the transport of 300,000 Jews to Kassa and, if possible, to Poland. [...] I was further told, and not by Jews, but by high ranking government officials, that the destination for the trains was Poland, where modern equipment is available for gassing people. The Jewish community says that they reliable proof that their Polish brethren were eradicated in a similar fashion.¹³

This hair-raising text also shows that by the early summer of 1944, some people knew what was coming. And still they stayed silent. Others simply “did their duty” at their desks. Most simply went about their daily tasks, asking no questions. They didn’t raise objections, nor hamper the work of the Germans and their servants. Under-secretary László Endre carried out inspections in several ghettos, and systematically called for stricter measures.

People were aware of the expulsions and forced relocations of Jews to ghettos. They remained stubbornly passive, and often indifferent. Many remained by-standers to the series of brutal anti-Jewish measures. Others dreamt of “Jewish wealth” obtained through contacts or on their own. The occupier’s plan worked. Without proof of wrongdoing, Hungarian society resigned itself to persecution. A majority of the population became tainted one way or another.

The mass deportation of rural Jewry began in the Kassa district. On 14 May, 3,200 Jews from Nyíregyháza and 3,169 from Munkács left in the first 45 cattle trucks. The mobilized National Guard “did its job” everywhere. The people squeezed into the freight cars went through rapid selection in Auschwitz-Birkenau on the 16th.¹⁴ Those condemned to death by gassing were led off in groups of five. Overnight, all chimneys of the crematoria gave off smoke. Nineteen Jews were selected for medical experimentation – twins and single twins. Their camp numbers went from A-1419 to A-1437.

(12) A few freight trains packed with Jews were sent off to the empire from the internment camp in Kistarcsa on 29 April and from the Bácska-Topolya additional detention center, the Nagykanizsa internment camp and ghetto on 30 April. This was the beginning of the deportation of hundreds of thousands. They went through a selection process in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 2 May, where the “selected” 2,698 prisoners were gassed to death. This was referred to in the SS jargon as special treatment (*Sonderbehandlung*). 486 able-bodied men and 616 able-bodied women were selected, and each was tattooed a number on their arm. (Czech, Danuta, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*, Hamburg, 1989, 764.) Some of them were set to build the ramp and new rails to prepare the arrival of the following shipments in Birkenau. Others were sent to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp for work to commandos (Wüstegiersdorf) and to Mauthausen (near Linz) for forced labour.

(13) *International Archive of the Red Cross*, Geneva, G 59/8/65, 30 May 1944.

(14) From mid-May, the running of four trains became “routine”. According to the shipping plan, the trains went towards Kassa – Hernád-Tihany until the end of June. The deportation commandos – avoiding telephones for secrecy – kept in contact with German commandos at regional government offices by couriers and radio. A report was written about each departing train. Each was signed by Eichmann, mentioning in SS jargon: “The shipment is going for special treatment (*Sonderbehandlung*) along the agreed route.”

(15) Budapest Holocaust Memorial, Committee on helping the deported, file n°3543. The Hajdus were deported on 5 July, and reached Auschwitz-Birkenau on the night of 7 July.

(16) *Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German diplomatic texts on Hungary, 1933-1944*, Kossuth Publications, 1968, 881.

Eichmann’s staff was only limited by the number of available train cars. They received Hungary’s full support. There were no obstacles to their sending the “labourer shipments”. They received important confirmation from the death camps. The confirmation included the numbers of Jewish men, women and children received. It also specified how many people were assigned to labour and how many to “special treatment”.

The huge crowd was left to fend for itself. It had nowhere to run. Many people fell apart in the crowded ghettos. There were numerous suicides. In the words of a survivor from Pécs:

In the early days of July they gathered us together in the reception camp located in the artillery barracks. This was terrifying 4-5 day period, during which people were tortured. A group calling themselves detectives came, who used the pretext of searching for hidden Jewish wealth to torture people half to death. The “detectives” had informers. [...] They took the wealthy Jews into a real torture cellar, and tried to make them confess where they had left their wealth. [...] Budapest detectives carried out the torture. [...] They took us from the artillery barracks to the courtyard of the Jewish temple. Here, Hungarian National Guard searched through our belongings, looking for anything of value. They forced the women to undress, and so-called midwives took us into a place where they felt inside our bodies, looking for anything of value. They took our wedding rings off our fingers, and when they wouldn’t come off, they would threaten to cut off the finger. [...] the way they dealt with us was completely humiliating. I saw a young mother from Dombóvár start to cry. She had placed a box of baby powder in her baby’s carriage, but they even took that from her. For me, after the horrors of the artillery barracks, finally being placed in the cars to be taken away felt like freedom.¹⁵

On average in June, ten to twelve thousand people – who had suffered through the misery of the ghettos and reception camps, and had been robbed of everything they had – were carried off daily in trains from Hungary to the gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Follows the rhythm of deportation, the number of deportees per National Guard district and the number of trains (see table 2).

Veesenmayer sent regular reports to Berlin. On 11 July he compiled the data from Eichmann’s commandos: until the previous day, 147 trains had carried 437 402 Jews from the country.¹⁶

In the meantime, preparations began for the deportation of Budapest Jews as well. By midnight on 24 June, they had to have moved into buildings in each district marked with a yellow star of David. This too was done through the Jewish Council. The foreign press began to publish more and more reports and reliable data on the atrocities in Hungary, of the mass genocide. Regent Horthy began to receive official complaints and warnings from around the world. He was dismayed to find that he was being personally blamed for the tragedy.

The successful opening of the second front also played a part in Horthy’s decision to stop the deportations, thus blocking the transfer of Budapest’s Jews. The German

Table 2

Sector	District	Ghettos, concentration camps	Trains	Number deported
I.	VIII.	16	92	289,357
II.	IV., X.	11		
III.	II., VII.	11	23	50,805
IV.	V., VI.	7	14	41,499
V.	III., IV.	8	10	55,741
VI.	I.	2	8	
Total:		55	147	437,402

plans were ready, but without help from Hungarian security forces, Eichmann could not carry them out.

At the end of June (probably after the 25th, following the successful Normandy landings), count István Bethlen, who had hidden in the countryside, wrote a memo.¹⁷ The venerable politician advised cooperation and a nationwide staff replacement. His advice was taken by the Regent as a way out of the crisis created by the occupation. He called lieutenant colonel Géza Lakatos¹⁸ to his side, to be named Prime Minister following Sztójay’s resignation. The Lakatos government was formed on 29 August. Its make-up was different from Sztójay’s, but contrary to Horthy’s aims, Germany’s closest allies in the government, Béla Jurcsek and Lajos Reményi-Schneller, kept their positions. The Regent charged the new government with preparing the country’s exit from the war.

Due to Prime Minister Lakatos’s lack of political experience and indecisiveness, precious time was lost. Hungary ended up in a state of war against Romania, which had joined the anti-fascist coalition. Regent Horthy became increasingly isolated, and kept delaying decisions. The truce delegation led by Lieutenant General Gábor Faragho left in secret, arriving in Moscow on 1 October. They brought a letter written in English to Stalin, in which Hungary’s head of state requested a truce.

While Regent Horthy announced the truce on the radio on 15 October, he could not insure it would be applied. Many of the officers refused to follow him. Horthy and his family were taken into German “protective custody”, while the Germans helped the far right “Hungarist” movement led by Ferenc Szálasi into power. A new wave of persecution and racial hatred unfurled. In a number of places this involved the murder of conscripts doing forced labour¹⁹, as well as renewed measures to terrorize the capital’s Jews.

In late October, in order to slow the advance of Soviet troops closing on Budapest, thousands of Jewish men and women were ordered to go and dig trenches. From 6 November, marches were initiated from the Óbuda brickworks to the western

(17) Bethlen called for the immediate replacement of the Sztójay government. In his view, one of the changes the government replacing the “rotten leadership” had to make was to “put an end to the inhuman, foolish, and un-Hungarian pursuit of Jews, by which the current government sullied the name of Hungary in the eyes of the world, and which spawned the worst kinds of corruption, theft and robbery”.

(18) Géza Lakatos (1890-1967) made a career as an infantry officer. He was promoted to Colonel-General on 1 August 1943, then to army constable. As Prime Minister, he provided at best grudging support, with many conditions, to the truce negotiations. He was responsible for the bungled attempt at exiting the war. Thereafter he was a prisoner of the Arrow-cross party, then of the Soviets for 10 months from 1 April 1945. He died in Australia.

(19) This happened in Crvenka, in Bačka, where 529 of the conscripts returning from Bor, Serbia were shot to death. The bloodbath in Kiskunhalas had 196 victims. A number of murders were also committed in and around Budapest.

(20) Detailed in Szita, Szabolcs, *Halálérőd [Death fortification]. Regarding the history of forced labour and military labour 1944-1945*, Kossuth Publications, 1989, 59-89.

(21) According to surviving documents, the number of victims of the Arrow Cross party in Budapest was between 5,000 and 8,000.

border (trains could barely be found) in order to hand the SS new forced labour in Hegyesalom. The processions were a shocking sight, walking through rain and sleet, leaving piles of dead bodies by the wayside on the road to Vienna. In the end, they delivered nearly 50,000 Hungarian Jews to the SS.²⁰

Most of the people caught in the nationwide wave of arrests in November by the police and National Guard were sent to the Csillagerőd in Komárom. By mid-month, deportation trains left for Mauthausen, Dachau, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg and Ravensbrück. Most of these people were Jews (civilians or doing forced labour), accompanied by captured groups of gypsies and many political prisoners. 12,000 to 15,000 people were shipped off from Komárom.

Members of Szálasi's Arrow Cross party searched for Jews in Budapest and in the countryside, bullied people, and shot to death whoever they felt might be suspicious. They killed groups of Jews whom they had first robbed on the shores of the Danube in Budapest, shooting them after throwing them into the river.²¹

They created a central ghetto in Pest, into whose cramped quarters they forced nearly 100,000 Jews. They deported Jews captured while hiding or during raids, as well as another roughly 17,800 men (who had been doing forced labour in or near the capital) from the Józsefváros train station. Most of them died during the harsh winter of 1944 while forced to work on earthen fortifications along the western border.

Nearly 600,000 Hungarian Jews lost their lives to persecution in the Holocaust. In most of Hungary, centuries of culture and the fruits of lengthy cooperation were lost. It's important that there are once again Jews in Hungary today, but the losses that were sustained continue to be painful and irreplaceable. ■