

THE DOUBLE CROSS BLOOD UNION
 OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF A SECRET MILITARY
 ORGANISATION OF HUNGARY IN THE 1920s



History

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Abstract

It is a very difficult task for historians to reconstruct the history of secret organizations. The present research paper deals with a paramilitary secret organisation, or rather secret irregular military formation called the Double Cross Blood Union that operated in Hungary in the 1920s. Paramilitarism and the operation of paramilitary formations, such as the German Freikorps or the Austrian Heimwehr militias were completely natural phenomena after World War One in Europe. Hungary was no exception, and the new, strongly right-wing government also used up different militias to strengthen its power. Double Cross Blood Union was a type of veteran union and the secret irregular reserve force of the Hungarian National Army at the same time, and had a very complex, controversial relation to the Government of Hungary. The present article makes an attempt to outline this complex relation.

It is surely not a promising endeavor to write about secret societies, since these organizations generally produce few documents, or do not produce documents at all. Furthermore, the larger is distance in time, the harder it is to trace back and reconstruct the activities of an organisation. The so-called Horthy-era (1920–1944) was one of the tumultuous periods of Hungarian history that was full of—mainly right-wing, irredentist and nationalist, and often intolerant and strongly anti-Semitic—secret associations, federations and societies that often overlapped, and had some degree of influence on politics.¹ These secretly operating formations sometimes had a legal cover organisation in the form of an association the constitution of which was approved by the Ministry of the Interior, but sometimes they operated in completely informal frameworks, based on verbal discussions and instructions between the members.

The Hungarian military secret society/secret irregular military formation called *Kettőskereszt Vérszövetség – Double Cross Blood Union* is very peculiar among these organizations, because it was definitely present in contemporary Hungarian publicity in the 1920s, and several illegitimacies (for example, political murders, murders and robberies, assassinations, terrorism and coup attempts) were attributed to its members in contemporary newspapers and other sources, yet it produced very few documents, or at least its documents were not preserved in the custody of archives. That is, historians know only little about it, and its concrete activities can often be based on presumptions, guesses and the attribution of certain events to the organisation, which can be confirmed only partially.

¹ Krisztián Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege. Diszkrimináció, szociál politika és antiszemitizmus Magyarországon 1914–1944*, Pécs, Jelenkor Kiadó–Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár, 2012, 97–100.

Basically, the Double Cross Blood Union, if we can trust the sources and widespread information, was not else but the military or paramilitary wing/sub-organisation of the very influential Hungarian secret society of the Horthy-era called *EtelköziSzövetség – Union of Etelköz*, which included the members of the political, military and bureaucratic elite.

Due to the memoirs of military bishop István Zdravec, ² the diary-memoirs of notorious paramilitary commander Lieutenant Colonel Pál Prónay ³ and the diary-memoirs of General Kálmán Shvoy ⁴ – these three basic documents that were also published in edited book form in the communist Kádár-era –, despite its secrecy and enigmatic character, we know fairly much about the Union of Etelköz, the politically influential secret society ⁵ that was established as a kind of ‘white’, nationalist counter-freemasonry. ⁶

The Union of Etelköz controlled the Hungarian irredentist and race-defending, legal and illegal associations to some extent, or at least it tried to control them, so it can be considered as a kind of right-wing umbrella organisation. For conspirative reasons, its name was shortened by the members as EX, ET and X. The organisation was established in 1919, Szeged, ⁷ in the close environment of the Hungarian counter-revolutionary government, and later it had approximately 5000 members, led by the so-called *VezériTanács – Council of Captains*, a 7–12-strong leading body until 16th October 1944.

² István Zdravec, *Páter Zdravec Titkos Naplója*, ed. Borsányi György, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1967. The original source can be found at the Historical Archives of the State Security Services under the reference code HU-ÁBTL-A-719.

³ Pál Prónay, *A határban a halálkaszáll. Fejezetek Prónay Pálnaplójából*, ed. Ervin Pamlényi–Ágnes Szabó, Budapest, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1963. The source can be today found in the custody of the Hungarian Archives of Political History and Trade Unions: HU-PIL-IV-973.

⁴ Kálmán Shvoy, *Shvoy Kálmán titkos naplója és emlékirata 1920–1945*, forráskiad. Perneki Mihály Budapest, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1983. The original source can be found in the custody of the Csongrád-Csanád County Archive of the National Archives of Hungary: HU-MNL-CSML-XIV-12.

⁵ The Constitution of the Union of Etelköz also remained in the records of Dr. József Minich’s People’s Tribunal trial in the custody of the Budapest City Archives: HU-BFL-XXV-2-b-8311/1947.

⁶ Hungarian historian Miklós Zoltán Fodor wrote a summarizing research article on the history of the Union of Etelköz: Zoltán Miklós Fodor, *Az Etelközi Szövetség története*, Nógrád Megyei Múzeumok Évkönyve, 2007/XXXI, 118–156.

⁷ The Union of Etelköz certainly had some political influence, since high-ranking politicians, administrative officers and military officers were among its leaders and members. See: László Erdeős, *A Magyar honvédelem egy negyedszázada 1919-1944*, ed. Zoltán Babucs, Gödöllő, Attraktor Kiadó, 2007, 115–117.

The Union of Etelköz installed its seat at the hall of the strongly paramilitary *Magyar OrszágosVéderő Egylet (MOVE)*⁸ – *Hungarian Defence Force Association* which included mainly active and demobilized soldiers in Budapest, Podmaniczky Street.⁹ As for its rites and outlook, the Union of Etelköz wanted to resemble Freemasonry, detested and considered to be unpatriotic by its members, and ironically even the common hall of MOVE and EX was confiscated from the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary. Through its network of relations the organisation had a serious effect on the political life of the era, since influential politicians like Prime Ministers Count István Bethlen and Count Pál Teleki, ex-Prime Minister Count Gyula Károlyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs Count Miklós Bánffy, or Tibor Eckhardt, President of *Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete (ÉME)* – *Association of Awakening Hungarians*,¹⁰ the most influential nationalist mass organisation of the era¹¹ were among its members. Those who were invited to the membership of EX, had to take oath to life and death stating that they will serve irredentist and race-defending, nationalist goals. The Council of Captains discussed all important political issues. The cover organization of the Union of Etelköz was *Magyar Tudományos Fajvédő Egyesület – Hungarian Scientific Race-Defending Association*, which was established on 28th September 1920, and the

⁸ The *MOVE – Hungarian National Defence Force Association* was founded on 15 November 1918 as a paramilitary counter-revolutionary association, and gradually became one of the largest mass organizations of the Horthy Era, with a large part of its membership made up of military officers. One of its founders was Gyula Gömbös, later Prime Minister. In the 1920s, together with the Association of Awakening Hungarians, it was one of the most influential anti-Semitic and revisionist associations of the period, with a majority of representatives of the Arrow Cross and other extreme right-wing parties (e.g. László Bánkúti, Gábor Baross, László Endre, Berthold Feilitzsch, etc.) in its leadership from the second half of the 1930s. From 1942 onwards, its leadership mobilized to unite Hungarian far-right organizations, and many of its members joined party militia of the Arrow Cross Party. After the German invasion of Hungary, the smaller radical right-wing associations were merged into the *MOVE* by a decree of the Minister of the Interior. The fragmentary surviving records of the association can be searched in the Central Archive of the National Archives of Hungary: HU-MNL-OL-P 1360. About its history see the following monograph written in the Communist period: RudolfnéDósa, *A MOVE. Egy Jellegzetes Magyar Fasiszta Szervezet*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972.

⁹ Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *Szabadjóművesek*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, 68.

¹⁰ The *ÉME – Association of Awakening Hungarians* was the most influential nationalist social association in Hungary after the First World War and the revolutions, maintaining its own auxiliary police militias and paramilitary units in the early 1920s, and exerting a strong influence on party politics. Its members committed a number of notorious anti-Semitic and irredentist crimes, as well as acts of terror. Among its founders and board members there were many politicians and influential military officers such as PálPrónay, IvánHéjjas or GyulaGömbös who later became Prime Minister of Hungary. At its peak, its membership was in the hundreds of thousands, and its presidents in the early 1920s were GyörgySzmrecsányi, Tibor Eckhardt and DezsőBuday, members of the parliament. Its importance gradually declined after 1923, with the emergence of the Hungarian National Independence Party (commonly called Race-defending Party) which had split from the governing Unity Party (officially called Christian-National Peasant, Smallholder and Bourgeois Party), and more significantly with the formation of the Western-style Hungarian fascist and national socialist parties in the 1930s, some of whose members were members of the association. The Awakening Hungarians continued to operate alongside various radical right-wing political parties until 1945. About its history see: Tibor Zinner, *AzÉbredőkfénykora, 1919–1923*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989; Tibor Zinner, *AdatokazÉbredő Magyarok Egyesületének 1918. November–1920. Márciusközöttitörténetéhez*, Budapest Főváros Leváltára Közleményei, 1978/1, 251–284.

¹¹ According to Hungarian historian Miklós Zeidler, the Hungarian National Defence Force Association, the Association of Awakening Hungarians, the Union of Etelköz, the Double Cross Blood Union Association and other nationalist societies basically defined the ideology and cadres of the counter-revolutionary regime. Miklós Zeidler, *A revíziógondolat*, Pozsony, Kalligram, 2009, 105.

Minister of the Interior approved its constitution on the same day. The informal supreme leader of the EX was Minister of Defence, then finally Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös from 1932 until his death of 1936,¹² while in the 1920s he also played a leading role in the activity of secret and semi-secret associations and paramilitary formations connected to the ÉME and the MOVE, although he wore no formal position beyond being the President of the MOVE for a while.¹³ Furthermore, Gömbös was not only the informal leader of the radical right-wing movements of the era, but he might have known about the crimes planned and committed by different paramilitary formations, perhaps he even supported them,¹⁴ while the Union of Etelköz operated as a mastermind/umbrella organisation of the different rightist movements.¹⁵ Gömbös who left the governing party and established the so-called race-defending fraction in the Parliament in 1923, which not much later transformed into *Magyar Nemzeti Függetlenségi (Fajvédő) Párt – Hungarian National (Race-Defending) Party for Independence*, had a very active relation with paramilitary commander First Lieutenant Iván Héjjas who was one of the establishers of the ÉME and organized its local sub-organisations in the Hungarian Plain. From November 1924 the local sub-organisations of the ÉME and the Race-defending Party arranged their political assemblies in the Hungarian rural regions together, so it is unlikely that Gyula Gömbös did not know about the violent crimes committed by ÉME milita members and the paramilitary formations of Iván Héjjas.¹⁶ After the death of Gömbös, during the period of World War II the Union of Etelköz was becoming a more and more extremist right-wing organisation, orienting itself towards the Hungarian National Socialist Arrow Cross movement under the leadership of Baron Berthold Feilitzsch, the influential, highly pro-German background politician of the era of German ancestry, while loosing its political importance in parallel.¹⁷ However, it must be mentioned that in the 1940s the Union had a much more moderate wing under the leadership of conservative politicians, ex-Prime Ministers István Bethlen and Miklós Kállay which supported Regent Miklós Horthy during the unsuccessful attempt of getting out of the war in 1944.¹⁸

That is, we know fairly lot about the Union of Etelköz, however, as for its (para) military brother organistaion,¹⁹ the Double Cross Blood Union the situation is somewhat worse. If the sources are credible, then the Double Cross Blood Union was established in the end of 1919 in order to defend the counter-revolutionary regime and to fight Communist and other left-wing

¹² Jenő Gergely, *Gömbös Gyula. Politikaipályakép*, Budapest, Vince Kiadó, 2001, 208; and Shvoy, *ibid.* 74.

¹³ József Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula*, Budapest, 2012, Napvilág Kiadó, 100–101.

¹⁴ Vonyó, *op. cit.* 101.

¹⁵ Erről Zadravecz Istvántáboriüspök is íremlékiratában: Zadravecz, *op. cit.* 148–149.

¹⁶ József Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula és a hatalom. Egy politikussálettkatonatiszt*, Pécs, Kairosz Kiadó, 2013, 169–170.

¹⁷ Baron Berthold Feilitzsch, the leader of the Union of Etelköz, one of the influential background politicians of the Horthy Era finally joined and supported the Arrow Cross Party and its pro-German puppet government in 1944–1945. See Róbert Kerepeszki, *A Turul Szövetség 1919–1945. Egyetemi ifjúság és jobboldali radikalizmus a Horthy-korszakban*, Máriabesenyő, Attraktor Kiadó, 2012, 177.

¹⁸ Nóra Szekér, *Titkostársaság. A Magyar Testvéri Közösség története*, Budapest, Jaffa Kiadó, 2017, 81.

¹⁹ Géza Komoróczy defines the Union of Etelköz a paramilitary organistaion. See Géza Komoróczy, *A magyarországi zsidók története a Magyarország II. 1849-től a jelenkorig*, Pozsony, Kalligram, 2012, 380.

political powers; and later, after the ratification of the Treaty of Trianon the aims of the organisation were completed with irredentism, the intention of restoring Hungary's territorial integrity. The commander of the organisation was Colonel, later General Tihamér Siménfalvy,²⁰ hero of World War One, who was in contact with foreign radical right-wing organisations, mainly Austrian and German paramilitary nationalist groups. The commander of the organisation outside the capital was artillery captain Imre Makkay / Makai; furthermore, the commanders included the notorious detachment leaders of the Hungarian white terror First Lieutenant Iván Héjjas and Lieutenant Colonel Pál Prónay, the later Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös, László Endre, military bishop István Zadravec, Colonel György Görgey, General Károly Csörgey and Colonel József Sassy Szabó. Basically, the Double Cross Blood Union was strongly bound to the counter-revolutionary government of Szeged and the military forces commanded by Admiral Miklós Horthy, commander of the National Army,²¹ and politicians and military officers who later became very influential and were those times very open to the idea of military dictatorship participated in the establishment of the organisation. In these very tumultuous times Admiral Horthy who was soon elected as Regent Governor of Hungary by the parliament was also open to the introduction of military dictatorship, and the Entente powers and mainly moderate conservative politician Count István Bethlen could only gradually persuade him of resigning from this ambition and make him return to parliamentary, constitutional frameworks of the state.²²

Horthy himself otherwise was not the member of Double Cross Blood Union or the Union of Etelköz formally, he did not participate at the rites of these secret societies or swore their oath, since as a pragmatic and down-to-earth politician and military officer he was not attracted by secrecy and mysticism. Nevertheless, both closely overlapping secret organisations informally considered the Regent their real leader,²³ and Horthy could easily enforce his will and influence in the right-wing secret societies and openly operating nationalist organisations strongly connected to them.²⁴

The members of the militarily organised units of Double Cross Blood Union swore a very strict oath with the following text:

*'I, XY hereby swear to the Almighty Lord and to everything which is saint to me that, if it is a must, I fought against all movements and provocations of red persons subverting my country, and if it is a must, I fight with arms in order to recapture the robbed territories of my 1000-year-old Hungarian Homeland, and if necessary, I even sacrifice my own life. I loyally execute the orders of my commanders and superiors. If I break my oath, I am subject to the sentences of the Blood Court of the Double Cross Blood Union. So help me God.'*²⁵

²⁰ Lajos Serfőző, *A titkos társaságok és a róluk folytatott parlamenti viták 1922–1924-ben*, Párttörténeti Közlemények, 1976/3, 79–80.

²¹ See Ferenc Pölöskei, *Hungary After Two Revolutions 1919–1922*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980, 15.

²² Dávid Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós*, Budapest, Napvilág Kiadó, 2011, 66–92.

²³ See Prónay, op. cit. passim.; Shvoy, op. cit. passim.; Zadravec, op. cit. 130–132.

²⁴ Ungváry, op. cit. 98–99.

²⁵ Zinner, op. cit. 568.; HU-BFL-VII-5-c-198/1940.

The text of the oath otherwise remained among the documents of the suit of reserve First Lieutenant Gábor Jenő Kiss who was the deputy commander of the Department of National Defence of the Association of Awakening Hungarians which was a state-sponsored militia belonging to the Double Cross Blood Union and First Lieutenant Iván Héjjas's paramilitary *Alföldi Brigád – Brigád of the Great Hungarian Plain*. Gábor Jenő Kiss was involved in a serious embezzlement affair in 1923 and was sentenced to four months in prison. In 1940 he made an appeal of rehabilitation and wanted to become unpunished in a legal sense, and the most important documents of his suitcase 1923 were also attached to his case file of 1940. From these archival sources it turns out that the operation of the Association of Awakening Hungarian, its military-like detachment of national defence, the National Association of Home Defence, Double Cross Blood Union and the Brigade of the Great Hungarian Plain cannot be strictly separated from each other, and according to Gábor Jenő Kiss, these were not simply self-organising militias, but semi-official, secret military formations under the control of the General Staff of the Army which were organised mainly for anti-Communist and irredentist aims by the Government. All of this, of course, is consistent with other available, scattered sources and seems to confirm the quality of the secret military corps as a state agency. At lower levels, of course, these irregular military units, largely composed of veterans, enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, and their commanders were bound by secrecy to avoid reprisals from the Entente powers for a country under severe restrictions of armament. According to Jenő Kiss Gábor, the Chief of Staff of the Double Cross Blood Union was General Károly Uhlig (later changed his name to Csörgey), which is also in line with other sources.²⁶ However, Jenő Gábor Kis does not mention General Tihamér Siménfalvy as the commander of the Double Cross Blood Union, and it is obviously not known how much Kiss himself knew about the higher level operations of the secret military organisation.

Another version of the oath of the Blood Union is also known, which was also published by the illegal left-wing opposition press, which dealt much with radical right-wing secret societies, although we must treat it with careful criticism of the source precisely because of its uncertain origin:

*'I, XY, swear by Almighty God, and pledge by all that is holy before me, that I will obey the commands of my leaders and their appointed superiors with the utmost fidelity, and will keep the events of the Double Cross Blood Union in the strictest confidence. I swear that I am under no obligation to any other irredentist organization, and that I will take such orders only from my superiors in the Double Cross Blood Union. I will not deal with any political questions or the issue of kingship within the framework of the Double Cross Blood Union, and if I become aware of any such case, I will report it immediately to my superiors. If I break this oath, I will acknowledge the right of the Double Cross Blood Court to judge over my fate.'*²⁷

²⁶ HU-BFL-VII-5-c-198/1940.

²⁷ See [Szerzőnélkül], *A Kettőskereszt Vérszövetség eskümintája*, Az Est, 07. 05. 1926.

Although the constitution of the organisation has not yet been found in archival documents, the nationalist-irredentist, anti-Soviet, anti-Semitic and, due to the over-representation of former and active soldiers and the paramilitary structure of the organisation, clearly militaristic spirit of the Blood Union can be inferred from the versions of the oath. The subtle differences between the three versions of the oath are not surprising either, since the organisation was probably founded in 1919 with an anti-Bolshevist aim, and irredentism became the guiding ideology of the organisation later, after signing of the Peace Treaty of Trianon in 1920. The obligation of apoliticism is not surprising, since the ideas of irredentism and territorial revisionism in Hungary in the 1920s brought together people of very different mindsets, so in this secret organisation legitimists, those who wanted to freely elect a king, or those who imagined an authoritarian, military state found their common goals.²⁸ There is nothing extraordinary about the fact that several versions of the oath have survived, since like all similar organisations, the DCBU had several local sub-organisations, so there was certainly a degree of decentralisation in minor issues. Especially if we assume that the clandestine irregular military formation was never under a completely unified leadership, and that the various paramilitary commanders – usually senior officers of the army – competed with each other to get as many members as possible to obey them.²⁹

As for the number of members, it is rather uncertain, but in it is estimated to have been several thousands in the early 1920s. Endre Kürthy, a demobilised soldier and member of the Budapest battalion led by Captain Szigfrid Umlauf reported that he himself recruited around 300 members for the organisation – a figure which may of course be a gross exaggeration. The members of the association held their meetings in the gymnasium of the elementary school at 9 Nyárutca, which was made available to them by the local government of the capital.³⁰ In all likelihood, the cover organisation of the DCBU was NemzetiMúltunkKulturálisEgyesület – National Cultural Association of our Past, which was formed much later than the secret society itself, with its constitution only approved in 1922.³¹ According to a political police report that remained in custody of the Budapest City Archive from 1946:

'The Union was divided into territorial divisions in Budapest and in the countryside. Each division had general observers, chief observers and observers. These reported monthly on left-wing movements in their areas. If any data was needed on anyone, these observers were obliged to obtain it immediately. The political convictions of the members were not restricted within the anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik character of the right. Thus, among its members one could find pro-Horthy, legitimists, race-defenders and national socialists.

²⁸ Miklós Zeidler, *Külpolitikaésrevízió – Mindentvissza?*, in *A Horthy-korszak vitatott kérdései*, Budapest, Kossuth Kiadó, 2020, 175–196.

²⁹ Prónay's diary, HU-PIL-VI-973-volume III, p. 355.

³⁰ Serfőző, op. cit. 79.

³¹ Serfőző, op. cit.; HU-BFL-IV-1407-b-XI.üo.-151/1922. Cited by Zinner, op. cit. 564.

Their aim was not only to monitor the left, but also to rally and arm reliable elements on the right. Their armed terrorist units worked mainly in the Great Plain.

*Their anti-Bolshevik objectives gave them considerable political influence, but this began to fade during the Bethlen-era, as did the importance of the whole Blood Union in the 1930s, especially due to other modern right-wing movements. They were replaced by the Union of *Etelköz*.³²*

According to the above cited political police report, which is probably largely speculative and tries to exaggerate the past role of the organisation, Miklós Horthy's membership in the organisation cannot be proven, but he undoubtedly exerted his influence in it. Among the members of the DCBU leadership we find such prominent, mainly right-wing persons as: Baron Károly Than, General Kamilló Kárpáthi, General Jánky Kocsárd Jr. István Horthy, Lóránt Erdélyi, the chief notary of the county, Iván Héjjas, Lieutenant Colonel Szigetváry, Counts Mihály and Béla Teleki, Countess Vass, Dr. Petrányi Rezső, Count Teleki Tibor, MP, Chief Notary Vilmos Ernst, School Director Kálmán Ferentzy, Baron Lajos Hatvany, Captain Helle, Chief Notary János Kemény, Kunó Klebelsberg, Pál Prónay, Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, etc. Perhaps the most surprising in this list of names - which includes mostly right-wing historical figures, but also seems random – is the person Baron Lajos Hatvany, the member of an assimilated Jewish bourgeois family, who can hardly be accused of Horthyism, exaggerated nationalism or anti-Semitism, and who the best demonstrates that this source should also be treated with careful criticism.

According to Krisztián Ungváry, the organization held its secret meetings in the Nádor Garrison (one of the headquarters of the Prónay detachment, which suggests a close personal overlaps with the paramilitary corps of Pál Prónay), and its members were mainly gendarmerie and military officers, landowners and administrative officials. In addition to the Budapest headquarters, there were sub-organisations in every major city and county seat, and the members of the DCBU were mainly involved in the state apparatus in order to identify and prevent individuals and organisations with communist tendencies.³³ At the same time, the DCBU also included a large proportion of demobilised and therefore decommissioned officers from the enormous army of the dissolved Habsburg Monarchy,³⁴ who were struggling with existential problems.³⁵

³² HU-BFL-VI-15-c-205/1945. Report of the Political Department of the Budapest of State Police to the Mayor of Budapest on the data of the dissolved Double Cross Blood Union, Budapest, 3 December 1945.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ungváry, op. cit. 98–99.

³⁴ On the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its consequences see in detail: Ferenc Szávai, *Az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchia felbomlásának következményei. Az államutódlásvitáskérdései*, Pécs, Pro Pannonia Kiadó, 2004.

³⁵ Iván T. Berend, *Magyarország gazdasága az első világháború után 1919–1929*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966, 13.

An encyclopaedia article on the organisation which is often quoted in a number of publications, says:

*'The Double Cross Blood Union was a covert intelligence and terrorist organisation directly subordinate to the Union of Etelköz. Founded in July 1919, it supported the irredentist and race-defending policies of the Hungarian leadership through camouflaged assassinations, the organisation of free troops carrying out subvertive actions in the Hungarian-populated areas of the surrounding countries, and intelligence activities (e.g. in 1938 its members also took part in the actions of the Ragged Guard Operation in Transcarpathia). The leadership of the organisation was never unified. During World War II, this was particularly evident when a legitimist group of the organisation joined the parties of the Hungarian Front under the name Double Cross Alliance, while another group joined the Arrow Cross Party.'*³⁶

The notes written by General István Ujszászy, the head of the military secret service and later of the centralised intelligence agency called *Államvédelmi Központ – the State Protection Centre*, while in the custody of the ÁVH, the Communist *State Protection Authority* in 1948, coincide with this publicly circulating information, and among them we can find a very interesting document. According to this document, in the 1920s, a secret group of officers – mainly irredentistically motivated – were operating illegally within the Hungarian Defence Forces, but with the knowledge and consent of the Government and the Regent Governor. The group was led by Colonel Tihamér Siménfalvy, director of the Double Cross Blood Union, and later by Lieutenant Colonel Dezső Papp. The Siménfalvy Group was based in the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Buda Castle, and its activities were primarily focused on the Little Entente states, with the goal of preparing the reconquest of the Hungarian-inhabited territories. According to Ujszászy's note, IvánHéjjas detachments, and from 1932 the so-called (second) Ragged Guard were also subordinated to the same organisation, and in 1936 the 5th Press and Propaganda Department of the General Staff of the Hungarian Defence Forces, now under the command of Colonel Sándor Homlok, grew out of this secret military group. This department did not only serve the propaganda purposes of the Hungarian Defence Forces, but, like the previous secret group, it also prepared and carried out sabotage and sabotage operations in the neighbouring Little Entente states, and did all this in close cooperation with the Prime Ministers Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁷ The Siménfalvy group, later the Papp group, and finally the 5th Department of the General Staff led by Colonel Sándor Homlok undoubtedly existed, and from their activities, as well as from the organizing activities of Tihamér Siménfalvy (until his death in 1929), we can conclude that there were close overlaps with the Double Cross Blood Union. The planned establishment of a secret intelligence, sabotage and subversion group under the joint

³⁶ *Magyarország a másodikvilágháborúban. Lexikon A–Zs*, ed. Péter Sipos, Budapest, Petit Real Könyvkiadó–Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Intézete – Honvédelmi Minisztérium Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum–Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem–Magyar Hadtudományi Társaság, 1997.

³⁷ István Ujszászy, *Vallomások a holtak házából. Ujszászy István vezérőrnagynak, a 2.vk. Osztályvezetőjének az ÁVH fogságában írott feljegyzései*, ed. György Haraszti–Zoltán András Kovács–Szabolcs Szita, Budapest, Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára–Corvina Kiadó, 2007, 356–359.

control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence is also documented in a brief archival record written in 1920:

*'Agreement on the organization of the irredenta in the annexed territories: for the supreme leadership of the irredenta, a secret body under the control of the Government is to be established, under the leadership of one civilian and one military individual. This body shall receive instructions on general directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in political matters and from the military leadership in military matters, but shall act in agreement with the Minister for National Minorities in political matters. As executive organs of this central secret body, social organizations (leagues) shall be established separately for each national minority group. Financial support for irredentist purposes may be provided by the Government or by individual resorts only through the secret organisation.'*³⁸

The document quoted above is certainly not a mere draft, as the Archives of Military History do indeed contain documents on the activities of a military unit of intelligence nature under the command of Colonel Tihamér Siménfalvy. For example, the Siménfalvy group was involved in the Hungarian irredentist diversionary activities in Transylvania in 1919-1920, which, among other things, resulted in the so-called Timisoara Levente Suit, based on largely fabricated accusations, but which nevertheless had some real basis.³⁹ In this case, young Hungarians from Timisoara, mostly high school and university students were brought before the Romanian Extraordinary Military Tribunal for plotting against the Romanian state power (at the time when the future borders of Romania and Hungary had not yet been clarified by international peace treaties and the status of Romanian-occupied Transylvania was still in question) and for acquiring large quantities of firearms and explosives. It is difficult to clarify to what extent the Hungarian military intelligence service of the National Army of the time were behind the Hungarian student conspiracy, which did not mean a serious threat to the Romanian state. However, a certain intelligence officer named Lieutenant József Mike was involved in the case, and documents relating to the Timisoara student conspiracy and the criminal trial were also sent to Colonel Siménfalvy. The officers of the Hungarian military secret service probably started organising an irredentist conspiracy on their own initiative, without any higher orders, or at least they were involved in a spontaneously evolving movement, and Colonel Siménfalvy initiated the prosecution of Lieutenant József Mike József at the Hungarian General Staff.⁴⁰

³⁸ HU-MNL-OL-MOL-K 64-1920-2-60. Record without title or signature, 1920. 04. 06. Cited by Béla Angyal, *Érdekvédelem és önszerveződés. Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai Magyar pártpolitika történetéből*, Fórum Intézet–Lilium Aurum Kiadó, Dunaszerdahely, 2002, 50.

³⁹ About the levente trial at Timisoara see Béla Borsi-Kálmán's monograph: Béla Borsi-Kálmán, *Kisfiúk a nagyviharban. A temesvári 'Levente-pör' – azelszórómán 'irredenta per' története, 1919–1922*, Budapest, Kortárs Kiadó, 2020.

⁴⁰ Borsi-Kálmán, op. cit. 113–114.

It would be a mistake, therefore, to simplify the Timisoara student conspiracy to a covert operation of the secret military unit known as the Double Cross Blood Union which operated for irredentist aims. However, based on the sources, it is certain that the military formation under the command of Colonel Siménfalvy played some role in this case, and its members influenced the events.

However, it is worth treating the above mentioned sources with thorough criticism, because on the one hand István Ujszászy, for example, wrote his own notes at least partly under the influence of communist state security bodies, and on the other hand, no sources about the Siménfalvy-group called the Double Cross Blood Association by its name. However, legal historian Pál Nándori, in his highly Marxist but still usable monograph on the international legal aspects of the assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister Barthou in Marseilles, which resulted in death, clearly described half a century ago that the Siménfalvy-group was identical to the DCBU, and later the Hungarian military secret services, of which the DCBU can be regarded as a kind of predecessor, were also in close contact with various Croatian paramilitary groups.⁴¹ Referring to archival sources, Nándori claims that from the very beginning the DCBU was under government control, and was not a self-organising organisation, but a state agency, a clandestine military formation, whose primary objective was indeed to prepare terrorist attacks, sabotage and subversive actions against the Little Entente states, and in the medium term, territorial revision of Hungary.⁴² According to a Foreign Ministry draft, the military commander of the organisation was really Colonel Tihamér Siménfalvy while the political leader was diplomat Kálmán Kánya, later Minister of Foreign Affairs. The diversionary activities were planned to be directed mainly against Czechoslovakia, Romania and especially Yugoslavia. Another submission passed to the Foreign Minister describes in great detail how acts of diversion, sabotage and terrorism were to be carried out beyond the borders.⁴³

According to the testimony of the sources, the Double Cross Blood Union / Siménfalvy group did not only prepare acts of sabotage in the territory of the Little Entente states, but also actively sought contacts with German and Austrian far-right paramilitary organisations, including the militias named ORGESCH (Organisation Escherich) and ORKA (Organisation Kanzler). In 1921, at a meeting in Graz, the possibility of a joint Hungarian-German occupation of Czechoslovakia in the event of a future war was negotiated about.⁴⁴ In addition, the aim of the DCBU was not only to carry out diversionary, and sabotage terrorist operations,⁴⁵ but also to circumvent the restrictions of armament imposed on the defeated states of the First World War,

⁴¹ About paramilitarism in Yugoslavia see: DMITAR TASIĆ, *Paramilitarism in the Balkans. Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, 1917–1924*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

⁴² HU-MNL-OL-K 64-1921-41-187.

⁴³ HU-MNL-OL-K 64-1920-41-515.

⁴⁴ HU-MNL-OL-K 64-1921-41-221.; HU-MNL-OL-K-64-1921-41-199.; Katalin G. Soós, *Magyar-bajor-osztrák titkos tárgyalások és együttműködés, 1920–1921*, Acta Universitatis Szegediensis de Attila József Nominatae. Acta Historica, 1967/XVII, 3–43.

⁴⁵ Pál Nándori, *A hirtenbergi fegyverszállítás*, Hadtörténelmi Közlemények, 1968/4, 636–657.

since it allowed a large number of people to be recruited and trained in secret military status.⁴⁶ The Blood Union in this sense may have been very similar to the *German Black Army (Schwarze Reichswehr)*. Among the militias within the German Black Army, there was also a paramilitary unit, the so-called Organisation Consul, under the command of senior navy officer Corvette Captain Hermann Erhardt, which operated as a secret society and had a secret service character, and to which several political assassinations were attributed, and whose members often carried out diversionary activities against the Entente states. With some simplification, it can be said that this irregular military unit which operated clandestinely and far exceeded the limits of the law even at home, gradually grew up into the military secret service of National Socialist Germany, the Abwehr, under the command of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.⁴⁷ Based on international, mainly European examples, the Double Cross Blood Union can therefore be compared with other secret, quasi-state paramilitary organisations after the First World War. Nevertheless, Pál Nándori's monograph cited above also acknowledges that the sources of the Hungarian irredentist secret military formations⁴⁸ are rather scarce, so we can only draw some general conclusions about their actual activities from the sources rather than make definite statements about them.⁴⁹ Of course, not only Hungary, but also the Little Entente states, like the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, operated intelligence services, and for understandable reasons, they were most suspicious of Hungarian activities. A Serbian intelligence report from 1926 started that in addition to the right-wing umbrella organisation *Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége – Federation of Social Associations*⁵⁰ and the banned *Területvédelmi Liga – League for the Protection of Territory*,⁵¹ there were some twenty secret irredentist-terrorist organisations operating in Hungary, whose members were engaged in intelligence activities in the Little Entente countries:

'From these organisations come the so-called Christian Socialist workers who replace socially organised workers wherever possible. These Christian workers work in factories where war material is secretly produced. They were used to counterfeit French francs, as well as passports, banknotes, revenue stamps and the seals of certain military commands of the Little Entente states. In addition, Hungarians living in the Little Entente states are used to obtain official documents,

⁴⁶ Pál Nándori, *A Marseille-I gyilkosság nemzetközi jogi vonatkozásai*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972.

⁴⁷ Robert G. L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism. The Free Corps Movement in Post-War Germany 1918–1923*, New York, W. W. Norton and Company, 1969.

⁴⁸ S. d. N. C. 518.M. 234. VH. Requête du Gouvernement Yougoslave en vertu de l'article paragraphe 2, du Pacte. Communication du Gouvernement Yougoslave, 34–41. 1. Cited by Nándori, op. cit. 88.

⁴⁹ Nándori, op. cit. 88–89.

⁵⁰ *The Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége (TESZ) – Federation of Social Associations* was a right-wing umbrella organisation in the 1920s which included all the influential irredentist social associations like the Association of the Awakening Hungarians and the Hungary Defence Forces Association as well. It was presided by the influential politician Baron Berthold Feilitzsch, but it was really controlled by its vice president, later Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös. About its history, see: Róbert Kerepeszki, [A politikai és társadalmi élet határán. A Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége a Horthy-korszakban](#), in *'...nem leleplezni, hanem megismerni és megérteni'*. *Tanulmányok a 60 éves Romsics Ignác tiszteletére*, ed. Sándor Gebei Sándor – Iván Bertényi Jr. – János M. Rainer, Eger, Esterházy Károly Főiskola, 2011, 373–388.

⁵¹ Nándori, op. cit. 90.

*proclamations or instructions from the authorities on how to behave towards local non-national elements. On the basis of these proclamations or instructions, they produce false documents in which they accuse the governments of the Little Entente and send them to London, America, Rome and Paris.*⁵²

These lines could certainly refer to the Hungarian paramilitary auxiliary police organisation called *Nemzeti Munkavédelem – National Labour Protection*, which, according to some notable sources, was a form of survival of the Double Cross Blood Union, and which will be discussed later in more detail.

We have already discussed the overlaps of personnel between the various nationalist-irredentist associations, secret societies and the armed forces and other state bodies in the beginning of the Horthy Era. In addition, in the early 1920s, the various (right-wing) civilian militias claimed and/or exercised authority in the manner conferred on them by the (then still fragile) state, or by arbitrarily exceeding the powers conferred on them by the state, so it is not at all to be excluded or surprising that the members of the Double Cross Blood Union in the 1920s closely overlapped with the apparatus of the later Hungarian secret service agencies.⁵³ Gyula Gömbös, later prime minister and chairman of MOVE, often stressed that he was in possession of much secret information and gave the impression to his military and political colleagues that he exercised considerable influence over the military intelligence and counter-intelligence apparatus, which was not without any basis at all. Namely, in 1919-1921, there were close informal links between the National Army, the military intelligence and counter-intelligence services and the MOVE, which were formed in Szeged, and the secret societies had a great influence on their operation.⁵⁴ In contrast to the Union of Etelköz, which was not just a secret political organisation with pragmatic aims, but a mysterious, mystical, philosophical-esoteric organisation of spirituality, which wanted to create a kind of special Hungarian nationalist religion for its members, it is not known whether the DCBU had any mystical rituals apart from the very strict oath which threatened the members even with death penalty for members in the event of treason/insubordination. The UoE, although its meetings presumably resulted in political decisions, or at least exerted real influence on them through its senior public officials, can be described as a political speculative secret society. Its members did not gain their influence by becoming members, but the other way round, the society tried to recruit people with a certain level of influence, who were considered trustworthy and loyal to the right-wing political regime. Certainly, however, as is the case with any man-made organisation, the personal connections made here did not necessarily hinder anyone's career.⁵⁵ The DCBU, on the other hand, was an armed paramilitary organisation, mostly composed of active and ex-soldiers, and its aim was to carry out operational

⁵² *Délszláv levéltári források 1919–1941*, ed. Áprád Hornyák, Pécs–Bp., Kronosz Kiadó–MTA BTK TTI, 2016, 126–127.

⁵³ Tamás Kovács, *Az ellenforradalmi rendszer politikai rendészetének genezise, 1919–1921*, *Múltunk*, 2009/2, 66–92.

⁵⁴ Gergely, op. cit. 80–83.

⁵⁵ Zdravec, op. cit. 140–141.

activities (intelligence gathering, data collection, even armed repression if necessary) against left-wing movements, and later to prepare the revision of the Paris Peace Treaties and restore the country's territorial integrity. The DCBU was therefore much more a clandestine military formation and intelligence service, operating with the knowledge and consent of the Government, although sometimes arbitrarily deviating from its objectives at the level of individual members or groups, than a self-organising secret association.

In line with all this is István István T. Ádám's memoir-monograph on the West Hungarian uprising, written in 1935 partly for propaganda purposes, based on the memories of the insurgents, and thus politically rather biased, which also devotes a short chapter to the DCBU, mostly about the organization's participation in the uprising.⁵⁶ According to the author, the DCBU was a patriotic, disciplined military organisation whose members took a strict oath to serve their country, and membership gave them essentially no rights, only duties. Their meetings were held in the gymnasium of the Szalag Street Primary School in Buda, they closely overlapped with Pál Prónay's detachment in the Nádor Garrison, and in 1921 they participated with the greatest enthusiasm and honour in the defence of Burgenland on the Hungarian side, since the Entente had decided that the area would be annexed to Austria. In the Communist Kádár Éra, Marxist historiography tried to oversimplify the importance and activities of the radical right-wing social associations and secret societies of the Horthy Era, which really existed and were influential, sometimes even portraying them as a kind of shadow government.⁵⁷ This is the same in the case of the Double-Cross Blood Union. In his monograph on the counter-revolution, which is useful in terms of its data content, but highly propagandistic in tone, party historian Dezső Nemes, for example, writes that the DCBU was one of the most significant secret organisations of the first period of the Horthy Era, and it was founded by the so-called 'twelve captains'⁵⁸ of Szeged, the later commanders of the National Army in July 1919. The organisation was all the time under the control of the Hungarian military, and its medium-term aim was to use its paramilitary units to break out tension and rebellion in the Hungarian-populated areas annexed to neighbouring states after the Treaty of Trianon (mainly in the Highlands, which had been annexed to Czechoslovakia), where the regular army would then move in to reoccupy these areas with the pretext of restoring the order. According to Dezső Nemes, the DCBU was also involved in counter-espionage, internal counter-reaction and the commission of domestic terrorist attacks allowed by the Government, and he also claims, referring to Prónay's diary, that the organisation was established before the formation of the Union of Etelköz, even though it was later somehow supervised by the political secret society.⁵⁹ Although Dezső Nemes makes rather strong statements about the DCBU, he refers only to press sources, apart from Pál Prónay's diary, so although his statements have some truth, they should be treated with thorough criticism. Prónay himself also writes in his notes –

⁵⁶ István T. Ádám, *A nyugat-magyarországi felkelés története*, Budapest, Külpolitika Kiadása, 1935, 115–118.

⁵⁷ Rudolfné Dósa, op. cit. 84–132.

⁵⁸ Tamás Kovács, op. cit., 64–92, 75.

⁵⁹ Dezső Nemes, *Az ellenforradalom története Magyarországon 1919–1921*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967, 155–160.

obviously with some exaggeration, in order to emphasise his own historical role - that he himself organised the irredentist military units, including the Double Cross Blood Union. Prónay names as the leaders of the organisation, among others, officers and senior officers György Görgey, Sándor Teleki, Imre Makay, Jenő Ranzenberger (later Ruskay), General Pál Nagy, Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian Defence Forces, and General Károly Uhlig (later Hungarianised his name to Csörgey), Chief of the General Staff of the Budapest Law Enforcement Troops those times. The number of members of the KKVS in the 1920s was relatively large, considering that it was not an ordinary, self-organizing association, but an irregular military unit (mostly consisting of armed members) – it could reach even 15–20.000 men.⁶⁰ As we can see, the source base of the DCBU is very scattered, and the information available to researchers on the functioning of the organisation is still contradictory. However, in the 1920s, at the beginning of the Horthy Era, following the civil war after the fall of the Soviet Republic of Councils of Hungary, there were a number of shockingly serious crimes, sometimes demanding several people's lives, committed by the secret and less secret social associations and paramilitary formations of the period. The Double-Cross Blood Union was associated with them in public discourse, in the press and in parliamentary debates.

For Count Bethlen István's Government who was striving for consolidation in domestic and foreign policy as well, the bomb raid of Csongrád on 24 December 1923 which caused a great outcry and claimed the lives of three persons was one of the last drops in the glass. Bethlen promised at the Parliament on 3 January 1924 that he would personally interrogate paramilitary commander First Lieutenant Iván Héjjas about the Csongrád bomb outrage among other things, and if his responsibility was to be found, he would be treated in the same way as anyone else.⁶¹ Héjjas was also interrogated by the police in connection with the Csongrád bomb explosion and the conspiracies of nationalist secret societies and paramilitary groups in general, in the presence of the National Police Commissioner Imre Nádosy himself, but in the end it was not proven that he was personally involved in any criminal activity.⁶² Of course, this was certainly nothing more than a bargain between the paramilitary commander and the government and possibly Regent Governor Miklós Horthy himself.⁶³ Besides Horthy, Gyula Gömbös, who later became Prime Minister, must have played a major role in the fact that Héjjas was never brought to trial during the Horthy Era, and was never seriously prosecuted for the acts committed by him and others under his command, even though his crimes were obvious to many people.⁶⁴ The example of Iván Héjjas described earlier tells us a great deal about the relationship between radical irredentist-nationalist associations, secret societies and the paramilitary units with countless links to them and the Hungarian government. Not only did the former paramilitary commander not have to answer for

⁶⁰ Zinner, op. cit. 173.

⁶¹ Nemzetgyűlési Napló, 1922–1926/XVIII, 337–338. Lajos Serfőző, *A titkos társaságok és a konszolidáció 1922–1926-ban*, 36.

⁶² Serfőző, op. cit. 36.

⁶³ Bodó, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Bodó, op. cit.

his actions before the judiciary system, but he later received Vitézs title,⁶⁵ a kind of specifically Hungarian knighthood, earned a doctorate in law for his book on aviation law, became a member of parliament and was later a well-paid and respected official of the Hungarian state. He owed his political rise to Gömbös who became Prime Minister of Hungary a few years later, in 1932.

Of all the paramilitary commanders with a common past and common crimes, and once with formidable power, it was Lieutenant Colonel Pál Prónay who was the most unable to achieve any kind of consolidation. Because of his failure to show sufficient loyalty to the Regent Governor on the occasion of King Charles IV's second attempt of return, and because the brutal activities of his detachment, his arbitrary assassinations and adventurer-like political actions he became increasingly burdensome for the Bethlen government,⁶⁶ and he was eventually forced to retire, become sidelined, and was also expelled from the Union of Etelek, the pro-government political secret society of the Era.⁶⁷

In accordance with the spirit of the consolidation, the paramilitary formations and national defence militias still operating in various areas of the country, such as the Héjjas Brigade of the Great Hungarian Plain and other armed units of the Association of Awakening Hungarians were then essentially disarmed and regularised, and their law enforcement and military powers which could be traced back to the turbulent civil war of 1919 were definitely and unequivocally abolished. At the same time, a new paramilitary organisation, the Office of National Labour Protection was set up under the control of the Ministry of the Interior and the State Police, primarily to break strikes and regulate left-wing workers' movements and riots. It was a kind of white, strongly right-wing workers' militia whose members were equipped with handguns and had the same powers of action and use of weapons when on duty as those of the police, but it was rather an auxiliary police rather than a military force.⁶⁸ The Brigade of the Plain, the State Security Agents and the national defence militias of the Awakening Hungarians were also integrated into this organisation, so they were under much tighter government control, but could essentially continue to operate.⁶⁹

The Double Cross Blood Union also continued its activities within the framework of the National Labour Protection, but it is interesting to note that General Kálmán Shvoy wrote in his diary that the DCBU was founded under this name in 1923, as a kind of successor organisation to the Brigade of the Great Plain led by Iván Héjjas, and that it allegedly continued its activities under the codename *Főtartalék – Main Reserve*⁷⁰ as a secret special operations military unit, formally within the Ministry of the Interior and the National Labour Protection, but in reality

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Péter Konok, *Az erőszak kérdései 1919–1920-ban*, 84.

⁶⁷ Prónay, op. cit. 322–324.

⁶⁸ HU-MNL-OL-K 26-XXII-6010; 5.818. M. E. számú rendelet a nemzeti munkavédelmi intézmény fegyverhasználati jogáról, 1923. Augusztus 2., Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára, 1923, 274.

⁶⁹ Dósa, op. cit. 151–152.

⁷⁰ *Csak szolgálati használatra! Iratok a Horthy-hadsereg történetéhez, 1919–1938*, ed. Tibor Hetés–Tamásné Morva, Budapest, Zrínyi Katonai Könyv- és Lapkiadó, 1968, 499–500.

subordinated to the Ministry of Defence. Shvoy thus dates the genesis of the organisation itself to this period, to the end of 1923. There is also an archival source about the integration of the DCBU into the Office of National Labour Protection: a confidential circular from the Ministry of the Interior from 1926 which forbids the members of the National Labour Protection to refer to the new strike-breaking auxiliary police force as the Double Cross Blood Union even among themselves, as it is associated with rather bad public memories.⁷¹ The National Labour Protection was a strike-breaking auxiliary police force, but de facto it also operated as a covert military reserve force at the same time. Although it obviously had no significant combat value, its tens of thousands of members who were otherwise civilians in their daily occupations, but who owned firearms and were trained and could be mobilised to a certain extent, made a significant contribution to circumvention of the serious military restrictions imposed by the Trianon Peace Treaty. In this way, it also helped to pacify the former (in some cases irregular) soldiers of the National Army which had once numbered over 100.000 and was reduced to a maximum of 35.000 after 1921. In this strange, voluntary auxiliary police and reserve military status many people still felt being useful and in the service of the state. That is, the Hungarian radical right-wing militia movement which was loosely controlled by the Double Cross Blood Union continued to exist partly within the framework of this organisation, in a, so to say, domesticated form.⁷²

The testimony of General Count Károly Csáky, Minister of Defence in the bombing trial of József Márffy and his associates, one of the most important archival documents in the history of the Double Cross Blood Union already cited earlier also testifies that the DCBU was really established after the fall of the Soviet Republic of Hungary in the end of 1919, with the aim of bringing paramilitary organisations operating in the capital and the countryside under unified (state and military) control in order to restore the order, on the initiative of General BélaBerzeviczy, Chief of the General Staff of the National Army. It was then dissolved around 1923 in the form in which it had previously operated, and by dissolution Minister Csáky presumably means the integration of the DCBU into the National Labour Protection which officially took place towards the end of 1922, but in practice perhaps somewhat later, in several steps.⁷³

The Government Decree No. 7502 of 19 October 1923 definitely prohibited the participation of state employees, including members of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies to be members in associations whose activities were against or incompatible with the lawful order of the state or which did not have a constitution approved by the Minister of the Interior. That is, it was essentially the membership in secret societies that become prohibited for state employees.⁷⁴ In reality, of course, it was still not easy for the state to check – if it really wanted to check in the case of right-wing, pro-government organisations – who was a member of

⁷¹ HU-MNL-OL-K 149-1926-6-3473.

⁷² Dósa, op. cit. 134.

⁷³ HU-BFL-VII-5-c-16193/1923.

⁷⁴ Budapesti Közlöny, 24 October 1923.

what kind of association or with whom, how and for what purposes cooperated, especially if the given secret organisation produced no written documents for conspiratorial reasons.

In this way, although the Double Cross Blood Union officially ceased to exist in 1923, its members, in some form, were still partly in the service of the state, and they could continue their activities to achieve the goals which they thought to be patriotic...

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