



**LUDOVIKA UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE
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**THE HUNGARIAN SHADOW ARMY
SECRET IRREGULAR QUASI-STATE MILITARY ORGANISATIONS,
THEIR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND CLANDESTINE ACTIVITIES IN
HUNGARY BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS, 1919-1945**

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

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FORMULATING THE SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

As is now a well-known (military) historical fact, in the turbulent times of civil war after the revolutions of the First World War and the fall of the Soviet Republic, from the summer of 1919 onwards, the military and paramilitary armed forces supported the right-wing counter-revolutionary government in Szeged, and other irregular military units and militias attached to it, committed serious atrocities throughout the country, which were, unfortunately, part and parcel of the civil war-revolutionary situation. Of course, it is worth clarifying from the outset what exactly is meant by the term 'irregular military subset'. The new volume of the Hungarian Dictionary of Military Science gives the following precise definition of irregular armed forces:

"The term 'irregular forces' often refers to combatants who belong to a paramilitary group, militia, volunteer group, organised resistance movement or rebel forces. Irregulars are often 'part-time' combatants who do not wear uniforms or openly carry weapons on duty. However, irregulars can form part of a country's armed forces, as in Switzerland, where the army is almost entirely made up of uniformed militias. In international conflicts, irregular troops can be considered as legitimate combatants and are entitled to prisoner-of-war status if they abide by certain rules. These rules are: a) to distinguish themselves from the civilian population; b) to carry their weapons openly during confrontation and deployment; c) to be under responsible command; d) to adhere to international rules applicable to armed conflict as a matter of priority. In the case of internal armed conflicts, the status of prisoner of war is excluded and the government may prosecute its armed enemies under domestic law. However, all proceedings require "a tribunal duly constituted and operating on the basis of judicial guarantees recognised as indispensable by the educated peoples", in accordance with Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and international human rights standards now binding on all states."

The right-wing paramilitary wave of violence, the so-called White Terror, which was largely marked by the names of reserve first lieutenant Iván Héjjas (later captain, in some sources major), lieutenant colonel Pál Prónay and major Gyula Ostenburg-Morawek (later promoted to colonel), was partly a response to the equally violent communist government, repressive and genocidal measures of the Soviet government, and in part the individual cases were motivated by the psychosis of personal revenge, the guilt of losing the war, and in the post-war socio-economic crisis, often purely by the possibility of quick financial gain.

Paramilitary activities and organisations, which were present in almost all European states in the years after the First World War with varying degrees of intensity, are usually defined in the international literature on the subject as military or quasi-military organisations and activities that complemented or replaced conventional military forces. In some cases, this was made possible by the temporary or even permanent disintegration of the state, in others by the state itself, and in others by paramilitary formations acting against the existing state. In Hungary, after the First World War, there were examples of all three, but during and after the counter-revolutionary wave of 1919, the authoritarian conservative government used radical right-wing paramilitary organisations and formations primarily to consolidate its own power and employed them as supplementary units of the regular armed forces. The White Terror, which gradually replaced the Red Terror, lasted from 1919 to 1921, according to the consensus

of contemporary Hungarian historians, but its after-effects in the form of serious, politically motivated crimes committed by members of irregular military formations under the limited control of the government and the military leadership were still felt in 1922 and 1923. The (semi)military violence thus essentially spread to the period following the election of Miklós Horthy as governor, the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty and the reconstruction and restoration of the Hungarian state under public law. In the first years of consolidation, the new Hungarian government was slow and reluctant to take action against the various quasi-state armed groups, free troops, militias, detachments (these military units had many names in the period, (there were many different names for these formations during the period, but perhaps 'detachment' and 'detachment' are the most common), when the activities of some of them began to threaten the very state institution they were originally intended to defend.

The brutality of soldiers returning from the fronts of the First World War, who had experienced total political, social and economic collapse in their homeland, who were used to extreme situations of violence and who were increasingly disrespectful of human life, overheated nationalists and at the same time driven by strong anti-Semitic feelings, The series of shockingly violent events that took place between 1919 and 1921 on the Danube-Tisza riverbed, which were marked by the names of Lieutenant Colonel Pál Prónay, Major Gyula Ostenburg-Moravek and Lieutenant Iván Héjjas, are also outstanding among the events of the White Terror. This series of murders and atrocities can be linked to the persons of Iván Iván Héjjas, a reserve first lieutenant, and his deputy, sergeant major Mihály Francia Kiss. However, Iván Héjjas was not only a military officer, paramilitary commander and one of the key figures in the wave of (para)military violence on the Hungarian right in 1919-1921, but also one of the leaders of the radical right-wing mass movements that were influential during the first few years of the Horthy era, such as the Association of Awakening Hungarians, He was an emerging and influential backbench politician of the early Hungarian radical right (operating on paramilitary principles and in close contact with the armed forces, providing them with semi-official auxiliary units), who easily found his place in the period of Bethlen consolidation. It is a shocking fact of military history, however, that the detachments of the National Army and the soldiers of the detachments probably did not interpret their activities as cruelty and crime, but as an act of war, as a fight against the internal enemies of the state/home country, in today's terminology mostly as a special military operation, and their acts of military violence during the civil war period are, whether we like it or not, an integral and broader part of Hungarian military history.

Here it is worth making a very brief digression into military theory to clarify that special purpose military forces and special military operations, special forces in the modern sense, were formed at the beginning of the 20th century, at the very time when the Hungarian irregular military units mentioned above were operating. The major development of the field came shortly afterwards, during the Second World War, when all the major forces involved in the fighting created specialised units for special operations behind enemy lines. These types of small units, which would strike the enemy by surprise, had already existed during the First World War and between the two world wars. Depending on the country and the culture of war, special military forces can perform functions such as air operations, counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, covert operations, hostage rescue, destruction of critical infrastructure, elimination of political targets, various intelligence operations and various forms of non-conventional warfare. Special Forces have played an important role in the history of warfare, where the aim has been to carry out high-

damage, rapid ambush-style operations or sabotage rather than the more traditional conventional hit-and-run. They have also played and continue to play a significant role in reconnaissance, intelligence gathering in the vicinity or among the enemy and, increasingly, in countering irregular forces, their infrastructure and activities. It is important to clarify here that special military forces themselves can, and in practice very often do, operate in an irregular context, as was the case with the Hungarian military formations between the two world wars. Their main predecessors were, incidentally, the various special-purpose formations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's army in the First World War, and more than one soldier who could later be called a Hungarian 'special forces' soldier (also) served with such formations during the First World War.

Apart from the atrocities of the White Terror and the violence committed by the detachment soldiers, it is a little known fact of Hungarian military history that Iván Héjjas was essentially a second-third rank member of the Hungarian political elite until the German occupation of the country in 1944, an influential chief official of the government, not least because of his past as a paramilitary commando and because of his influential, uninhibited and violent role in the building of the counter-revolutionary regime, he was one of Miklós Horthy's close confidants and military advisors. At the same time, he was the person who linked to the conservative government a paramilitary-parapolitical network, mainly composed of First World War veterans and largely organised along radical right-wing principles, which was in contradictory relations with the Hungarian government and military leadership throughout the period between the two world wars, but the military leadership was composed of this changing composition of personnel, The military leadership used these irregular military formations, consisting of a number of variable but returning members, to achieve its own goals on a number of occasions, primarily in military operations that in today's military terminology can best be described as irregular warfare, asymmetric warfare or special military operations. These paramilitary organisations were shadow formations of the armed forces and a kind of extended deep state of the state. By deep state I mean primarily state or at least quasi-state organisations that do not outwardly declare their close links with the state (e.g. secret service front organisations), but are supported informally by the state or even outright created by it to achieve various publicly undeclared goals. In the Horthy era, these Hungarian deep state or quasi-state organisations were mostly in the form of military social associations, which were also closely linked to the armed forces. From the openly operating irregular military formations of the civil war period, military formations specialised in asymmetric warfare, of a secret service nature, which did not officially exist or at least did not exist outwardly as state bodies, gradually grew up, with varying degrees of intensity, They were present and active throughout the period between the two world wars in Hungary, carrying out primarily political policing activities at home, operating an extensive reporting network and carrying out a number of special military operations abroad on behalf of the government.

The definition of asymmetric warfare in the Hungarian military literature is mostly as follows, and the most prominent Hungarian military scholar of our time, István Resperger, has dealt with it. The significance of this form of warfare in the Horthy era was primarily that the combat capability of the relatively weak Hungarian armed forces, which were under severe armament restrictions and were in principle small in number and with only token armaments, was obviously significantly inferior to that of the neighbouring states, and therefore the Hungarian forces could only achieve moderate successes through unconventional combat actions (e.g. The Hungarian army could only achieve moderate successes in the neighbouring states by means of

non-violent (e.g. diversion, sabotage, propaganda, special operations, economic warfare, etc.).

Asymmetric warfare is therefore "military and non-military operations, procedures and methods, often based on the ideological, religious or ethnic communities of several organisations, conducted for precisely defined political ends, which build on direct and indirect effects and reinforce each other, and which are the domain of different dimensions of security, a mode of warfare, especially a method of warfare, the combined effect of which is to impose one's will on the enemy. [...] In the military and national security fields, asymmetry is, in practice, a variety of actions (operations), organisations and ways of thinking different from those of the opposing party, with the aim of maximising its own advantages and exploiting the enemy's weaknesses, as well as seizing the initiative or gaining greater freedom of action. Asymmetry can be political-strategic or military-strategic, or a combination of both."

In the period between the two world wars, Iván Iván Héjjas, a reserve first lieutenant and later a reserve captain, organised Hungarian irregular military formations for special purposes on several occasions and led special military operations on behalf of the Hungarian government and military leadership, in which, in my opinion, asymmetrical warfare, which is not anachronistic in the Horthy era, and, in close connection with it, irregular warfare as an unconventional form of warfare, also played a very important role.

The commanders and members of the irregular military units operating between 1919 and 1921, the so-called "detachment soldiers", such as Iván Héjjas, are nowadays, shortly after the centenary of the Red and White Terror, increasingly the subject of debates on the politics of memory, and in the right-wing discourse on the politics of memory in the West Hungarian uprising, In the recent past, some authors have even attempted to rehabilitate him, or even to make him a national hero, because of his undoubtedly patriotic role in the uprising in the Hungarian Revolution, the Transcarpathian divergence and the anti-German resistance, and because of his tangible political and military achievements. As a scientific work, the present work does not intend to enter into debates on the politics of memory regarding the person and the assessment of reserve captain Iván Héjjas, even if it expresses the opinion that the author, as a scientific researcher, believes that the historical figure in question is an irredeemable, yet undoubtedly important figure in Hungarian history in the light of the available, well-comparable and comparable data, sources and the historical facts they reveal.

The person of Iván Héjjas deserves research attention precisely because, according to the available data, he was the leader of the radical right-wing Hungarian militia movement, which emerged in 1919, was active until 1925, but with varying intensity in the period between the two world wars, Hungarian irregular military formations, militias, free troops (these formations can obviously be called by various names, in my work I use the terms irregular military corps, paramilitary corps, militia, free troops, detachment, etc.), which were active in the Hungarian military in the period between 1925 and the two World Wars. I use these terms more or less synonymously) was the central figure, the cult figure. His political and military career and the development of his network of contacts between the two world wars is, with some simplification, practically the history of the Hungarian radical right-wing (semi-)military units and militias that functioned as quasi-state organisations, and therefore this work also relies to a considerable extent on the author's introductory studies and small and micro-monographs in his source publications

on this topic, Iván Héjjas, a reserve lieutenant and later a reserve captain, as one of the main protagonists, and the results of the author's earlier doctoral thesis, entitled *The fragmentary history of Hungarian radical right-wing secret paramilitary organisations in the first years of the Horthy era, 1919-1925*, which was defended *summa cum laude* in the field of historiography. Nevertheless, the author is determined to publish significant new research results on the military and political history of Hungary between the two world wars, if only because, while in his earlier doctoral thesis on history he dealt strictly speaking only with the events of the period between 1919 and 1925, in the present work he examines the history and operation of the Hungarian paramilitary sphere and secret Hungarian military organisations, military intelligence auxiliary units and front organisations up to 1945.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses of my work, which I consider to be at least partially justified in the light of the basic archival research, the source exploration and the available literature, are basically the following:

1.) Despite the highest military rank he formally achieved (reserve captain), Iván Héjjas was one of the most important and influential figures in Hungarian military forces and military politics, and in this sense indirectly in Hungarian military history, and in certain areas he played a decisive role. There were at least three occasions when Iván Héjjas, as commander of a large irregular military force, could be said to have belonged to the Hungarian military high command/elite. These occasions were irregular military operations, in today's terminology practically special operations, which did not fit into the official government policy in any meaningful way: The 1921 uprising in West Hungary after the civil war period of the White Terror between 1919 and 1921; the 1938 Carpathian divergence operation; and the anti-German Hungarian military resistance beginning in 1943, in which, despite plans, the irregular military corps organized by Iván Héjjas ultimately did not play a meaningful role, according to the available data.

2.) The career of Iván Héjjas, his political and military career, is a good case study, and highlights the contrast between the strongly conservative government of the Horthy era and the radical right-wing parapolitical-paramilitary groups, acting as quasi-state organs, albeit sometimes escaping state control, and, in some cases, outright against the state, characterized by a complex and contradictory relationship based on mutual interdependence and common interests, sometimes in competition and sometimes in close cooperation based on a commonality of interests. Consequently, conclusions can also be drawn about the close relations between the Hungarian armed forces and the radical right political scene, as the government and the military leadership demonstrably made use of militias, free groups and irregular military formations linked to the radical right on numerous occasions, and used them as quasi-state organs to achieve political goals in military operations that for some reason did not fit into official domestic, foreign and military policy (similar to the use of German Freikorps-type free troops and the German Black Army during the Weimar Republic and the German military intelligence services that grew out of them).

3.) The paramilitary organisations of radical right-wing counter-revolutionary groups (the Brigade of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Double Cross Blood Union, the National Defence Department of the Association of Awakening Hungarians, the first and second Ragged Guards, the National Labour Defence Organisation, the National Association of Hungarian Race Defenders, and finally the National Defence Association), led partly by Iván Héjjas, varied in intensity between the two world wars, but practically throughout, they functioned as covert, semi-official-illegal, state-organised and supported, irregular units of the regular Hungarian armed forces, partly circumventing the arms limitations imposed on the countries that had lost the Great War, operating mainly in the field of secret service and special operations, and less so in the field of conventional combat. Government control over them was only partial. These organisations, apart from their right-wing radicalism, mostly represented the spirit of the Awakening and the racist movement of the 1920s, which was marked by the name of Gyula Gömbös, and were more or less loyal to the conservative (though increasingly right-wing) government and the military officer head of state, and initially left-wing, communist and social-democratic, and later against the Hungarian fascist and national socialist parties organised along German-Italian lines, they were engaged in counter-reaction and political policing work, while attempting to prepare the reoccupation of the Hungarian territories annexed under the Trianon peace treaty and the realisation of the government's revisionist political goals.

4.) Between the two world wars, irregular military units/paramilitary organisations, partly organised and led by Iván Héjjas and other former "detachment" officers, had a wide range of tasks (in the early years of the Horthy era, internal policing, guard duties, policing activities, political policing against left-wing organisations, especially communist-minded individuals and organisations, intelligence, reconnaissance and diversionary activities and irregular warfare in the surrounding quasi-hostile Axis countries, etc.), and it is very difficult to distinguish between the traditional military, law and order, and intelligence and counter-intelligence (in today's terminology, intelligence-national security (in the period: state defence/state security) functions. They also functioned as covert, or sometimes not so covert, auxiliary units of the Hungarian army, which was under arms restrictions after the loss of the First World War. Iván Héjjas and his fellow soldiers in detachments, are still neglected and forgotten figures in the history of the Hungarian military, law enforcement and secret service because of their activities in these organisations and the complex scope of their tasks and activities. The semi-secret and semi-official irregular military units performing a wide range of tasks can be seen in historical perspective not only as special operations military bodies, but also as part of the state security organisation of Horthy-era Hungary. The Hungarian military leadership of the era tried to weaken its rivals by using the method of special warfare, and the Free Troops came in handy. On the one hand, it used them as a cover, but on the other hand, this interdependence and the intelligence background may explain Iván Héjjas' 'untouchability', his second-third line status and his informal influence, which seemed much greater than the rank he held.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Most of my work on military and political history, and at the same time on the history of the secret services, is based on archival research. The history of Hungarian irregular military formations and paramilitary organisations is - ironically - mostly based on the archival sources

of criminal proceedings conducted following serious atrocities committed by their individual members, and therefore most of these documents are the result of criminal proceedings, and are the product of judicial - police, prosecution or court - bodies. Since the Hungarian military leadership, largely in order to protect the honour of the armed forces, tried in the 1920s to distance itself from the crimes committed by members of various militias and semi-official military formations, and sometimes the legal status of these formations was dubious, criminal proceedings against their members were very often tried not by military but by civilian criminal courts. Most of these sources are now held by the Budapest City Archives, in the fonds of judicial and law enforcement bodies (such as the records of the People's Court case against Iván Héjjas and his associates after 1945), and a somewhat smaller number of them are held by the Military History Archives (where, of course, not only judicial sources but also other sources relating to the history of secret-secret military organisations are sporadically found).

I must make it clear that my work is not intended to function as a traditional biography of a politician/military officer, as it necessarily stretches the boundaries of that, but rather as a work on the history of organisation and operations, and closely related to that, the history of the secret services. But it is certainly a historical fact that in Hungary between 1919-1920 and 1944, Iván Héjjas, a reserve lieutenant and later a reserve captain, was the political-military officer through whose person and network of contacts the conservative, but increasingly rightward-shifting political elite and the otherwise heterogeneous, sometimes pro-government, sometimes disaffected, and sometimes even outright attempting to overthrow the government, were able to influence, radical right-wing paramilitary organisations and irregular military formations, closely linked to the regular armed forces and the intelligence, counter-intelligence and political police forces, and through whose mediation the government used these armed formations for its own military operations, which were not in line with official domestic and foreign policy and were, so to speak, peculiar. The political and military career of Iván Héjjas is, with some simplification, nothing more than the sum total of certain events in Hungarian military and political history, since Héjjas was involved on several occasions in the (re)organisation of various militias into additional units of the Hungarian armed forces. It was thanks to his leadership and organisational skills, his extensive network of contacts with the counter-revolutionary veteran paramilitary sphere, and not least his unconditional loyalty to the military officer head of state, the regent governor Miklós Horthy, that he was able to remain a political actor of limited influence, but still considered influential, throughout the period between the two world wars. Of all the commanders of the White Terror detachment in Hungary between 1919 and 1921, it was perhaps Iván Héjjas who reached the highest social and political level, and his military and political career, his related network of contacts and the indirect influence he had on Hungarian military affairs, the organisation of the armed forces and military policy between the two world wars deserves the attention of unbiased researchers.

At the same time, in the 1920s, Hungarian radical right-wing military circles were actively seeking foreign relations - for a time with the knowledge and consent of the government and the military leadership - with similar German and Austrian organisations (one might say, this is a relatively little known chapter in the history of Hungarian diplomacy in the Horthy era), and the relevant documents on foreign relations are mostly to be found in the archives of the Political Department of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Archives of the Hungarian National Archives.

In addition to the above, a third group of archival sources, which must of course be treated with cumulative criticism, but which is nevertheless very important and unavoidable, are the documents produced by the Hungarian political law enforcement agencies, which after 1945 were now operating under Soviet influence, documenting the operational reconnaissance work carried out both on former right-wing and radical right-wing political figures and soldiers who had gone into exile and those who remained at home, and, of course, reflect the partisan, far from objective, opinion of the state security apparatus, which worked under the strong influence of communist political ideology, and in some places greatly exaggerate the activities and significance of the political or military figures who played a role in the Horthy era. This is no different in the case of the background materials, investigative and operational files on Iván Héjjas and the state security work on the activities and members of the paramilitary organisations and paramilitary subordinates, which were indeed only semi-official in the socialist era and were largely led and organised by him. The majority of these sources, which are not objective and must be interpreted with heaped criticism, but which are nevertheless very important, are of course now in the custody of the Historical Archives of the State Security Services.

THE BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

In the course of my work, I will try to explore and present all the moments and chapters that are relevant to the history of the Hungarian irregular military formations and perhaps their main organizer, Iván Héjjas' military career, always using the available primary and secondary sources. However, as I have already mentioned, the sources are not available to researchers in equal proportions for the different periods of the period under research. Any significant differences in length and depth between the chapters of the essay, which may even give the impression that the whole narrative is fragmentary, are therefore mainly due to this disproportion, or in some cases even the lack of available sources. Where this is justified by the length and logical structure of a given chapter, the text is divided into smaller sub-chapters, and longer chapters are, as far as possible, concluded with summarising sub-conclusions. As far as possible, I have tried to interpret the events under examination not so much from the point of view of general military and political history, but always from the point of view of the secret services (and their cover services).

The structure of the thesis follows mainly chronological principles. First of all, as is usually the case in historical works, I consider it essential and extremely useful to provide a thorough and evaluative review of the narrower and broader historiography and the literature of the research topic, and to identify what is new in the present work compared to the more relevant earlier works that serve as its predecessor and basis.

After this, I will attempt to reconstruct the political, military and, one might say, secret-soldiering biography of Iván Héjjas, reserve lieutenant and later reserve captain, including, of course, a sketch of the period from his birth (1890) to 1919, the beginning of the political and military career of the historical figure in question. As Iván Héjjas was a central figure in the radical right-wing Hungarian militia movement that was formed in 1919-1920 and was active mainly in the 1920s, and in the Hungarian secret irregular military units that were active throughout the period between the two world wars, he was, so to speak, a central figure, on the pretext of his biography, I see the history of the organisations (also) led by him as being possible

primarily through micro-historical case studies - by exploring military, political and secret service events in which the radical right-wing politician-military officer played a key role, directly or indirectly. In the present work, I will also deal with the acts of violence committed by Iván Héjjas' detachment on the Danube-Tisza and the events of the White Terror that can be linked to Iván Héjjas, since this period can be considered the genesis of the later active Hungarian irregular military units of the secret Hungarian military. However, I will refrain from detailing other criminal and in some cases outright terrorist acts committed by other irregular military formations linked to this detachment, although in many cases under limited government control, although I will refer to them, as I have already dealt with them in my previous works, and the arbitrary, extra-legal acts of certain Hungarian irregular military formations are less related to the history of the secret service in the strict sense. Rather, I concentrate on special operations and acts of diversion that do not fit into official Hungarian foreign and military policy, but are nevertheless state-organized or at least state-supported to some extent, such as the 1921 uprising in West Hungary and the 1925 attempted forgery of hell that went wrong, the 1938 Carpathian diversionary operation, the attempted anti-German Hungarian resistance and breakout in 1943-44, and a few other similar operations documented as planned or carried out by the Hungarian military, which illustrate and support the highly secret service-like activities of these military organisations.

In parallel to this, I will sketch the radical right-wing (semi-)military organisations that are closely linked to the Hungarian armed forces, but in some cases also attempt to turn against the government, and which operate in very close personal overlaps, collectively, one might say, the Hungarian Shadow Army, which were in fact at least partly brought into being by the Hungarian government and military leadership, and from time to time used by the Hungarian government and leadership to achieve their own foreign and domestic policy goals in the framework of special military operations, and whose disaffected members (mostly veterans of the First World War and eclectic radical right-wing ideals) have from time to time toyed with the possibility of overthrowing the state order and introducing a military dictatorship, of course, in all cases without any serious resources or chances. These clandestine military organisations typically operated through clandestine cover organisations disguised as veterans' organisations, comrades' associations, rifle clubs, and also received their material and other resources from the military leadership from time to time in a covert, indirect manner. If the state occasionally found itself in combat, or at least in conflict, with its own deep state, these irregular military organisations basically functioned throughout as covert auxiliary units of the Hungarian armed forces and as extended organs of the military intelligence service(s).

I will also briefly and concisely present the history of the international relations of the clandestine Hungarian irregular military organisations and their lively attempts at cooperation with German and Austrian partner organisations.

SUMMARISED CONCLUSIONS

In the course of the research, I believe that it can be proven that Iván Héjjas, a reserve lieutenant, then captain, despite the highest military rank he formally achieved, was an important and influential figure in Hungarian military forces and military politics, and in this sense indirectly in Hungarian military history, playing a decisive role in certain areas. Therefore, his person and the irregular military network he operated deserve unbiased research attention.

In the period between the two world wars, there were at least three occasions when Iván Héjjas, as commander of a large irregular military force, could be said to have been part of the Hungarian military high command/elite, which were mainly irregular military operations, in today's terminology special operations, which did not fit into official government policy: After the civil war period of the White Terror between 1919 and 1921, the 1921 uprising in West Hungary; the 1938 Carpathian divergence operation, and the anti-German resistance beginning in 1943, in which the irregular military corps organized by Iván Héjjas ultimately played no significant role, according to the military historical data currently available.

Iván Héjjas's career, political and military career is an excellent and significant case study, and exemplary in pointing out the contrast between the authoritarian conservative government of the Horthy era and the radical right-wing parapolitical-paramilitary groups, acting as quasi-state organs, albeit sometimes escaping state control, and, in some extreme cases, even against the state, characterized by a complex, contradictory, but fundamentally interdependent relationship, sometimes in competition and sometimes in cooperation based on a commonality of interests. Consequently, conclusions can also be drawn about the close relations between the regular Hungarian armed forces and the radical right-wing political scene and its affiliated irregular military organisations, veterans' communities and free troops, since the government and the military leadership made use of irregular military formations linked to the radical right on several occasions, and used them as quasi-state organs to achieve political goals and in military operations that for some reason did not fit into official domestic, foreign and military policy, such as the use of German Freikorps, mainly consisting of First World War veterans, and the German Black Army during the Weimar Republic. Irregular military units were most useful to the government in cases where the Hungarian state could not undertake military operations on the territory of a foreign state, or at least against its interests.

The radical right-wing counter-revolutionary groups, founded and led to a large extent by first lieutenant Iván Héjjas, are paramilitary organisations (the Brigade of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Double Cross Blood Union, the National Defence Units of the Association of Awakening Hungarians, the first and second Ragged Guards, the National Labour Defence Organisation, the National Association of Hungarian Race Defenders, and finally the National Defence Association) with varying intensity in the period between the two world wars, but throughout, they functioned as covert, semi-official, semi-legal, state-organised and supported, irregular units of the Hungarian regular armed forces, partly circumventing the arms limitations imposed on the countries that had lost the Great War, operating in an irregular framework, mostly in the nature of secret services, with limited state control, although sometimes government control over them was only partial or non-existent.

These organisations, apart from their right-wing radicalism, mostly represented the spirit of the Awakening and the racialist movement of the 1920s, which was to be marked by the name of Gyula Gömbös, later Minister of Defence and Prime Minister, and were more or less loyal to the conservative, though increasingly right-wing, government and the heroic military officer head of state of the First World War, and initially on the left, communist and social-democratic parties, and later against the Hungarian fascist and national-socialist parties organised on the German-Italian model, while at the same time preparing the way for the reoccupation of the Hungarian territories tragically annexed under the Trianon peace treaty and the realisation of the government's revisionist political goals. Their operation and their function in the life of the

Hungarian state can be closely analogous to that of the German Freikorps and the Austrian Heimwehr-type militias, and in this way they can be placed in the context of international military history, and can be examined and should be examined within it, if only because in the 1920s, with the knowledge and consent of the government, Hungarian, German and Austrian paramilitary organisations were engaged in lively cooperation with each other.

In the period between the two world wars, irregular military units and paramilitary organisations, partly organised by Iván Héjjas and other former "detachment" officers, had a wide range of tasks (in the first years of the Horthy era, internal policing, guard duties, police and law enforcement activities, political policing against left-wing organisations, especially communist-minded individuals and organisations, intelligence, reconnaissance and diversionary activities and irregular warfare in the surrounding, quasi-hostile, small Entente countries, etc.), and their activities cannot and should not be considered in a clear-cut way between the traditional military, law and order, and intelligence and counter-intelligence (in today's terminology, intelligence and national security) functions. All this is made even more complex and difficult to understand, but at the same time historically interesting by the sad fact that the clandestine armed formations of the 1920s, led by influential military officers with strong government support, were not only a problem but also a sad fact, which also functioned partly as covert auxiliary units of the Hungarian army, which was under severe arms restrictions after the loss of the First World War, there was a thin line between the secret (service-like) state organisation, the politicising secret society, the comrades' association/veteran association with radical principles, and the criminal and terrorist organisation, thanks to the serious, politically motivated crimes committed by individual members. It is therefore also possible to prove that Iván Héjjas, a reserve first lieutenant, and his fellow officers in the special forces are important, but still neglected and forgotten, figures in the history of the Hungarian military, police and secret services, because of their activities in these organisations and the complex scope of their tasks and activities. For this reason, I believe that the semi-secret and semi-official irregular military units, which also carried out political policing, counter-intelligence and counter-intelligence tasks within the country, can be interpreted in historical perspective not only as special operational military bodies, but also as an integral and important part of the state security/security organisation system of Horthy-era Hungary.

NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

The main new scientific findings of the evaluation are the following:

1.) I consider it a new academic achievement of my thesis that I have presented the history of organisations that have been little known in the history of Hungarian military and law enforcement, or in the history of the Hungarian secret service in a narrower sense, and that most researchers have not traditionally considered their activities as the work of irregular military organisations in the Hungarian military and law enforcement history between the two world wars, Although the knowledge of their activities significantly shades the picture of the Hungarian armed forces and intelligence services between the two world wars that still exists in the academic public consciousness today. Based on archival research and the available literature, I also reconstructed the only fragmentarily documented history of the Horthy-era military and state security "deep state", the complex and contradictory system of relations between the Hungarian irregular military units, organisations and the government of the two

world wars, and I have described what can now be interpreted as special military operations, asymmetric warfare (diversion, subversion) and active intelligence operations, which these organisations carried out with varying degrees of success on the orders of the government and the military leadership, or at least with its approval, and in rare cases against its express intention. Wherever possible, I have placed their activities in the context of international military history and compared them with those of their German and Austrian 'counterparts', and I have also described the history of the Hungarian-German-Austrian paramilitary relations that were active in the 1920s, and the international attempts at rapprochement and cooperation between such organisations. In doing so, I also presented a specific, hitherto little-known segment of the history of (secret military) diplomacy in Hungary, since Hungarian irregular military organisations conducted secret negotiations with their German and Austrian sister organisations on behalf of their government, and their activities can thus be considered part of the history of Hungarian diplomacy.

2.) I have shown that the history of the quasi-state irregular military organisations examined in the chapters of this thesis complements the history of the regular Hungarian armed forces and the Horthy-era Hungarian state security services, which were secondarily part of the police and the gendarmerie, and I have shown how these organisations contributed to the activities of the official state intelligence services, as defined by the legal provisions, from the background, through their secret relations with the Hungarian state and their operation through front organisations. This suggests that there were many more and larger secret service organisations in Hungary between the two world wars than the number of officially operating organisations would suggest, and that the Hungarian secret service system of the period was more complex than one might expect from the history of officially existing state and non 'deep state' organisations. However, the data are fragmentary, as these organisations left few resources behind, and most of their activities were carried out in an informal framework, according to a system of verbal instructions, with the highest level of compliance with the rules of conspiracy in the secret services.

3.) On the basis of the available sources, I have proved that the right-wing paramilitary organisations functioned as covert, semi-official, semi-legal, state-organised and supported, irregular units of the regular Hungarian armed forces, operating in an irregular framework, carrying out secret service and special operations activities, and less useful in conventional combat operations. In addition to their right-wing radicalism, they represented the spirit of the Awakening-Species movement, were loyal to the government and the military officer head of state, and were initially a counter-reaction against the left-wing Hungarian national socialist parties, later organised along German-Italian lines, They also prepared the reoccupation of the Hungarian territories annexed under the Trianon peace treaty, the realisation of the government's revisionist political goals, and carried out operations not only at home but also abroad, with varying degrees of success.

4.) I have highlighted that between the two world wars, irregular military units had a wide range of functions, and that it would be difficult to distinguish between the traditional military, law enforcement and intelligence and state security functions in today's sense. Because of their

activities in these organisations, Iván Héjjas and his fellow soldiers are very important figures in the history of the Hungarian military, law enforcement and secret service, and the irregular military formations under study can be interpreted from a historical perspective both as special operations military bodies and as part of the complex state defence/state security organisation system of the period. Furthermore, in my view, these deep state organisations were strongly reserve military in nature, and the boundaries between professional intelligence professionals and civilians and agents working with their state intelligence services were sometimes blurred. At the same time, members of secret military organisations often carried out operations and also collected information as primary data gatherers, so the question of the exact size of the Hungarian state security apparatus between the two world wars can be asked in several ways.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Since my thesis is mainly a historical work, which examines organisations that have been in operation for 80-100 years, I see the scientific results of my thesis as being of practical use in the historical context, in the field of teaching the history of the Hungarian military, law enforcement and secret service. As a military and law enforcement historian and as a librarian-archivist-museologist, I take seriously the maxim that the past is the teacher of the present, and that, consequently, the data and connections that can be learned about the functioning of military, law enforcement and secret service bodies in the past can be of great use for the discourse of military and law enforcement studies in the present.

In the period between the two world wars, Hungary had an extensive military intelligence organisation, or in today's terminology, a system of special operations military formations, in a historical situation where international political pressure placed severe quantitative, armament and organisational constraints on the military forces. The existence of these irregular military organisations and their close links with the outside world could not be acknowledged by the government, which therefore often used front organisations in the form of various social associations, informal secret societies, sports organisations and voluntary auxiliary police units formally under the control of the Ministry of the Interior.

The operation and history of the secret, irregular, secret service and military intelligence units closely connected to the National Army/Hungarian Royal Defence Forces and its military secret service, the Records Office/2-vkf. department, and partly special operations units, and their complex relationship to the official state can be partially known on the basis of archival sources, although in a limited and fragmentary way. The members of these military bodies, headed by one of the main organisers of the secret irregular military formations, reserve first lieutenant Iván Héjjas, operated in a bloody and turbulent historical period, and although their activities sometimes went beyond the legal framework, they also had close links with the radical right. They were probably convinced that their actions, which they interpreted as a special operation, were in the service of their country, and their primary objective was to reattach at least part of the Hungarian-inhabited territories that had been transferred to neighbouring countries under the Trianon peace treaty. The task of the historian of war is not to make moral judgements about historical actors and events, but primarily to understand them and place them in the most complex historical context possible. Given that the 1920s-1930s-1940s were the period of the emergence of special-purpose military forces in the modern sense, and that this thesis is essentially concerned with their history and evolution in Hungary, the analysis of

individual military operations in the Horthy era may also provide useful conclusions for the study of special-purpose military forces today. Of course, special military operations, asymmetric and hybrid warfare are not new phenomena, but merely modern terminology for military methods that were already known in the past, since they were in fact already used in the American Civil War, more than 250 years ago. In the context of a hybrid war, which is unfortunately taking place in our neighbourhood, with special operations and irregular military formations, I believe that the history and combat activities of Hungarian special operations irregular military organisations, which operated between 1920 and 1945, are of great relevance.

In my opinion, the exploration and understanding of the historical military and intelligence data and connections presented in the thesis, as well as their placement in a broader military-historical context, may provide useful conclusions, additions and implications for present and future Hungarian military, law enforcement and national security experts.

THE SHORT CURRICULUM VITAE OF BALÁZS KÁNTÁS

Balázs Kántás was born in Budapest in 1987. He graduated from Eötvös Loránd University in 2009 with a BA in English Studies and an MA in Literature and Cultural Studies. Between 2011 and 2014, he was a scholarship student at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies of Eötvös Loránd University, where he obtained his PhD in Comparative Literature in 2015. Between 2016 and 2023 he worked as an archivist at the Hungarian National Archives, and in 2022 he received his second PhD in History at the Doctoral School of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University. Since autumn 2023, he has been working as a museologist at the Stamp Museum, currently as a consultant in the philatelic library and document collection. In 2023, his work as a literary historian and historian in a broader sense was awarded with the Attila József Prize, awarded by the Minister of Culture. He is the author and co-author of numerous specialist books, archival sourcebooks and philatelic catalogues. He is a member of the Hungarian Society of Military Science, and his primary research area as a military historian is the relations between Hungarian irregular military units and the government between the two world wars.

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