

The Doctoral School of History and the Department of History cordially invite you to the
Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis in

History

by

Szele Áron

on

**The Arrow Cross. The Ideology of Hungarian Fascism.
-A conceptual approach-**

will be held on

Monday, November 30, 2015 at 11:00

in the

**Senate room
Central European University (CEU)
Budapest—1051
Nádor 9**

Defense Committee

Chair: András Bozóki, Department of Political Science, CEU

Supervisor: Balázs Trencsényi, Department of History, CEU

Members: Constantin Iordachi, Department of History, CEU

Roger Eatwell, University of Bath

Reader: Béla Bodó, Missouri State University

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

I arrived in Budapest in the beginning of 2007, as an MA student at the CEU, to an atmosphere of tension and discontent. Hungary, by that time, was gripped by a recession and a general dissatisfaction with the powers that be coming from a significant section of the population. The loss of credibility of the political left, and the subsequent rise of the right-wing, in its conservative and far right manifestations, was palpable. As a Hungarian coming from the diaspora, I had the quality of a semi-outsider, and had a unique perspective, being accustomed to Hungarian culture, but not its contemporary politics. I could not help notice the situation, and contrast it to that of my native country, Romania, where the far right had all but died out as a political phenomenon. As a historian, I attempted to interpret the situation in a diachronic manner, comparing past situations to the present. As asymmetrical as these comparisons were, they opened up my interest in investigating a hitherto under-researched area, that of the far right and fascist ideologies in interwar Hungary. These past political projects were conspicuously present in the symbolism and legitimacy of the contemporary far right, which glorified the interwar period. Reading further into the material that became available to me, I came across certain trends of interpretations that seemed implausible and anachronic (see the literature review). Beyond simple intellectual curiosity toward the topic, I attempted to explain the apparent populist and mimetic leftist rhetoric of both the interwar fascism and contemporary far right.

The dissertation is structured into three major chapters, which constitute the body of the thesis. The first chapter is dedicated to explaining the current state of the research on the topic, and attempts to place my work within the major international historiographic debates on the subject of fascism. It also provides the reader with the needed socio-political context, in order to show the

political, intellectual and social background which gave birth to fascist ideology in Hungary. This also includes external influences, for I have partly explained the phenomenon as a product of domestic tendencies and adaption of foreign ideologies. The second chapter contains the actual results of my research, structured into four major sub-chapters, each dedicated to a certain group of ideas or concepts. In the first sub-chapter, I attempted to discuss the attempt of interwar fascism to create a certain type of national community through discourse and practice, and to define the nation on ethno-racial terms, all the while attempting to place Hungary as high up as possible in a European new world order. Closely following this, the second part of the chapter discusses the role of the narrative of leadership and charisma in creating hierarchies of power within state and society. These hierarchies were formed a binomial between leadership and the people, who were also given an important role, as fascism attempted to level social difference in favor of an organic community of the people, with a singular leader. This kind of definition of the people constitutes the topic of my third subchapter. The final sub-chapter of the second part of the thesis analyzes the narrative in which these concepts of people, nation, and leader were arranged. The narrative theorizing was disguised as historicist, but ultimately was an a-historic and anti-historic theory. The Hungarian nation would enter into a new phase of existence that would constitute the end of history, a sort of perpetual golden age. In the final chapter, I provided the conclusions to my work.

BIO

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STUDIES:

- graduate of “Ady Endre” theoretical high school of Bucharest, specialization: mathematics and IT, class of 2003
- Graduate of the University of Bucharest, Faculty of History, with the specialization of Modern European History; period of studies: 2003-2007.
- Master of Arts in Comparative History at the Central European University, Budapest, Department of History, class of 2007-2008.
- Presently Ph.D. Candidate at the Central European University, Budapest, Department of History, year of enrollment: 2008

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS:

- 2008: Ion Rațiu Family Foundation Study Grant
- 2008: Dinu Patriciu Foundation “Open Horizons” Scholarship
- 2014: Central European University Write-Up Grant

BOOK:

National movements and the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The activity and discourse of the Romanian National Party of Transylvania 1900-1914, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken, 2014

BOOK CHAPTERS:

- *Nationalism, Racism, Internationalism. The White Power Music Scene in Hungary and Romania*, in the book: Anton Shekhovtsov (ed.), *White Power Music in Europe*, Searchlight Magazine Publications, Northampton, 2012

- Contributor for the chapter *Hungary* in Martin Langebach, Andreas Speit (ed.) *Europas radikale Rechte: Bewegungen und Parteien auf Straßen und in Parlamenten (Europe's Radical Right: Movements and Parties on the Street and in Parliament)*, Zurich, Orell Füssli, 2013
- *Geo-Historical Overview in 25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The State of Integration of East and West in the European Union*, European Commission, Brussels, 2014
- *History in the use of diplomacy: France, Turkey and the EU facing the question of the Armenian Genocide* in Peter Balazs, Ahmet Evin (eds.), *Turkey and the European Union: Strategic Partners and Competitors*, CEU Press, Budapest, 2015
- *The visual politics of the radical right in Hungary*, in Fabian Virchow, *The far right and visual politics*, 2015 (forthcoming)
- *Fascism in Hungary* in the book: Constantin Iordachi (ed.), *Fascism in Interwar East-Central Europe. A reappraisal*, Brill, 2015 (forthcoming)

ARTICLES:

- *The Political language and activity of the fin-de-siècle Transylvanian Romanian Elite. Postmemorandism: toward a new ideology*, in *The Scientific Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov*, vol I. (50), 2008, pp. 291-301
- *A nemzettest formálása. Állampolgárság és szavazati jog Romániában (Formatting the National Body. Citizenship and Voting Rights in Romania)*, together with Zselyke Tófalvi, in *Pro Minoritate*, Spring 2011 Issue, pp. 61-70
- *The Public Relations and the Image of the Hungarian EU Council Presidency*, in *EU Frontiers*, nr. 8, June 2011, pp.24-30
- *Extraordinary Situations, Extraordinary Means: A Comparison between the regenerative projects of the Hungarian Radical Right yesterday and today*, in *The CEU Political Science Journal*, 2012
- *Фашистська харизма у міжвоєнній Угорщині: до поняття харизматичної влади (Fascist Charisma in interwar Hungary)*, in *Ukraina Moderna*, Tom 20, Fall 2012

- *A szélsőjobb kisebbségképe Magyarországon és Nagy-Britanniában (The Minority Image of the Far Right in Hungary and Great Britain)* in *Pro Minoritate*, Summer 2012 issue, pp. 143-161
- *A magyar szélsőjobboldal történelemszemlélete és világnézete a 20–21. században (The historical ideology and worldview of the Hungarian far right in the 20-21st centuries)* in *Múltunk*, 2014, nr.2
- *The historical ideology of interwar Hungarian Fascism*, in Matthew Kott, Tomislav Dulic (eds.), *Fascism on the periphery*, 2016, Special issue of *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* (forthcoming)

REVIEWS:

- Liviu Maior, *Romanians in the Habsburg army. Forgotten soldiers and officers.* (book review), in *Analele Universitatii din Bucuresti. Seria Istorie*, (In print/ to appear during the course of the year 2007) and in *East Central Europe Journal*, 2007. 09. 21., <http://www.ece.ceu.hu/?q=node/91>
- Liviu Maior, *Habsburgs and Romanians. From Dynastic Loyalty to National Identity*, (book review), in *East Central Europe Journal*, 2007.04.28., <http://www.ece.ceu.hu/?q=node/107>
- Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*, in *East Central Europe* nr. 37/2-3, 2011
- Egry Gabor, *The Metamorphosis of Transylvanianness: The Ideology and Identity Politics of the Transylvanian Party, 1940-1944*, in *East Central Europe*, 2012, Volume 39, Issue 1, pp 167 –169
- Daniel Siemens, *The Making of a Nazi Hero: The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel*, in *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Volume 20, Issue 5, 2013 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13507486.2013.832888?journalCode=cerh20>
- Daniela Baratieri, Mark Edele, Giuseppe Finaldi, *Totalitarian Dictatorship: New Histories*, in *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*

RESEARCH PROJECTS:

- *Fascism in Interwar East-Central Europe. A reappraisal.*
Hosting institution: Pasts Inc. Historical Research Institute, affiliated to the Central European University, Project Coordinator: prof. Constantin Iordachi, duration: spring 2010-spring 2012, participation: researcher and author
- *Civil Society Assistance to Georgia and Serbia*
Hosting institution: Center for European Enlargement Studies, affiliated to the Central European University, project coordinator: research director Andras Deak, duration: spring 2011-fall 2011, participation: technical advisor and proof-reader
- *The Radical Right in East Central Europe: Yesterday and Today*
Hosting institution: The Center for European Enlargement Studies, affiliated to the Central European University, Co-organizers: The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Budapest, and the Institute of Political History Budapest, duration: September 2011-September 2013, project director: prof. Peter Balazs, participation: researcher, author and project coordinator
- *“Reclaiming impetus” – Seeking EU-Turkey Convergence in Three Policy Areas* within the CEU-Sabancı University Joint academic initiative, participation: researcher
- *The changing world order and its implications for the “wider Europe”* (December of 2012 and May 2013), common project run by the Central European University’s Center for European Enlargement Studies and the OTKA (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund), participation: researcher

CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION:

- Biography and Identity: Dilemmas and Opportunities. The 4th Annual Conference in European History held at CEU Budapest, 6-9th of May, 2010, with the paper entitled: *“The Lure of Fascism in 1930’s Hungary: Three Disparate Trajectories”*
- Transfers and Demarcations. The 5th Annual Conference in European History held at The European University Institute in Florence, 28th-30th of April 2011, with the paper entitled: *“Rock and Nationalism. The Flying Buttress of Hungary’s Nationalist Subculture”*

- The Structures and Futures of Europe. The 17th Annual Conference of the Hungarian Political Science Association, held in Budapest (Karolyi-Csekonits Palace and Central European University), 20-21st of May 2011, organizer of the roundtable: *“The Hungarian-Romanian historical reconciliation as a regional diplomatic model”*, and with the paper entitled: *“Hungary and Romania. Politics, history and diplomacy in the last three decades”*
- What follows after the Crisis? Approaches to Global Transformations. 7th CEU Conference in Social Sciences, held at CEU Budapest, 27-29th of May, 2011, with the paper entitled: *“Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary Means: The regenerative projects of the Hungarian Radical Right yesterday and today”*
- *Achievements of the First Hungarian EU Council Presidency*. Public Seminar of the Center for European Union Enlargement Studies, 27th of June, 2011, with the paper entitled: *“The image of the Hungarian EU presidency”*
- *Fascism in the periphery*, international conference held by the Hugo Valentins Centrum at the Uppsala University, Uppsala, 17-18th of November, 2011 (forthcoming-confirmed), with the paper entitled: *“From the brink of the precipice to eternal glory. The weltanschauung of Hungarian fascism in the 1930-40’s”*
- *Transformation in European History. Preconditions – Processes – Perceptions*, University of Vienna, May 3-5, paper: *“The Idea of Change and Transformation in 20th Century Hungarian Historical Thought”*
- *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, University of Nurnberg “Georg Simon Ohm”, 27-28 September 2012, paper: *“Masculinity and gender in far right music in Hungary”*
- *“Reclaiming impetus” – Seeking EU-Turkey Convergence in Three Policy Areas*, workshop at the Sabanci University, Istanbul, 4-5 October 2012, paper: *“History in the use of diplomacy: France, Turkey and the question of the Armenian genocide “*
- *The 7th European Consortium for Political Science’s General Conference*, 4 - 7 September 2013, Institut D’Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux, paper: *“Radical Visions of Europe in 20-21st century Hungary”*
- *Inaugural Conference of the Vox-Pol Network of Excellence on “Violent Online Political Extremism”*, 27-29th of September 2014, at King’s College London, paper: *“Networking Hate. The Online Hate Network of the Far Right in Hungary”*

- *Contemporary forms of protest in the Euro-Asian space: challenges for social science, psychology and humanities research*, Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Hamburg, Hamburg, 23-24 October 2014, Paper: “*The idea of revolution, protest and revolt in Hungarian political thought in the 20-21st centuries*”
- European Center for Minority Issues workshop on ‘*Anti-Semitism in Romania and Moldova: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Challenges*’, 1-2 October 2015, Flensburg, Germany
- SIMON WIESENTHAL CONFERENCE 2015: *Modern Antisemitism(s) in the European and Colonial Peripheries from the 1880s to 1945*, November 30 - December 2, 2015, Vienna

ORGANIZED CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS:

- “*The Hungarian-Romanian historical reconciliation as a regional diplomatic model*”, panel discussion within the conference: The Structures and Futures of Europe. The 17th Annual Conference of the Hungarian Political Science Association, held in Budapest (Karolyi-Csekonits Palace and Central European University), 21 May, 2011
- “*The radical right in East Central Europe: Yesterday and today. State, society, history*” at the Central European University, October 5, 2011
- “*The Radical Right and Europe*”, at the Central European University, May 10, 2012
- “*The Media and the Radical Right*” at the Central European University, November 19, 2012
- “*The Quality of Democracy, 25 Years Later. Human Rights, Media and minorities*” at the Central European University, June 2nd, 2014