

## Building an Anti-Semitic Network in Europe

### Tibor Eckhardt at the Head of the Association of Awakening Hungarians, 1923–1927

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**Abstract.** This study analyses Tibor Eckhardt's presidency of the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete, ÉME) between 1923 and 1927, showing how he intended to position the movement between the far right of the Horthy era and pro-consolidation conservatives dominating the government. The ÉME quickly transformed from a base for white terror into a nationwide mass organisation and a hub for a transnational network. Involving Italian Fascism, the German *Völkisch* movement, as well as Romanian, Austrian and Russian partners, Eckhardt's efforts were aimed at the transnational expansion of Hungarian racialist thinking. The process culminated in the 1925 anti-Semitic congress held in Budapest, while it also showed the movement's limitations. Internal contradictions within the organisation, conflicts of its transnational allies, political isolation, and pressure from the consolidated authoritarian system ultimately led to the decline of the ÉME. The study points out that the ÉME was not only an important part of Hungarian history, but was also significant in the intertwined histories of the far right in (Central) Europe. Thus it serves as an example of the networked, permeable nature of early Fascism. Through the figure of Eckhardt, it also highlights the key role of political entrepreneurs in the institutionalisation of the far right.

**Keywords:** Tibor Eckhardt, Association of Awakening Hungarians, racial protection, transnational networks, far-right movements

### The Association of Awakening Hungarians and Tibor Eckhardt

At the end of 1924, the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete—ÉME) held a two-day national congress at the headquarters of another characteristic Hungarian far-right organisation, the Hungarian National Defence Association (Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület—MOVE), attended by four hundred guests. The event, which turned out to be a parade for the Hungarian far right, was attended by the national leaders, the leaders of rural districts, and illustrious speakers.<sup>1</sup> On the first day, President Tibor Eckhardt, Co-President Dezső Buday,

1 Both were regular speakers at events organised by racialist movements. Kund, "Méhely Lajos és a magyar fajbiológiai kísérlete," 246; Kund, "A faj uralmi akaratának útja," 43.

and two heavyweights of Hungarian racial biology, Lajos Méhelÿ and Sándor Keltz, gave presentations. On the following day, the radical priest Ottokár Prohászka and Budapest politician Károly Wolff spoke alongside several prominent racist politicians. Eckhardt argued for “close and strong international cooperation between nationalist peoples and nations” and summarised the main points of the racist worldview. On the one hand, he claimed that having Hungarian as one’s mother tongue was not sufficient for someone to be Hungarian. On the other hand, he also stated that “in a biological sense, we can hardly speak of races today. However, we can speak of historical races.”<sup>2</sup> His lecture was more permissive and moderate in this regard. It differed from the views of Méhelÿ, who spoke at the same event, idealising “pure-blooded Hungarianness” and demanding anti-Jewish “race protection laws.” Keltz also denounced “blood mixing” and referred to “mongrels.”<sup>3</sup> However, most of the audience were certainly not historians of ideas, and their interests were probably better represented by Iván Héjjas, who, after arriving amid great ovation, immediately “jumped onto the presidential podium and said the following: »I am fed up with speeches. If you have come to the same conclusion, then we have already achieved the goal we set for ourselves.«”<sup>4</sup>

We do not know whether President Tibor Eckhardt, who closed the meeting after this—and who in the meantime had to arrange for the evacuation of a liberal press employee<sup>5</sup>—reflected on the nature and importance of his association and his own role in the ÉME.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, additional complications arose at the evening

2 “A zsidó nagytőke okozta a világháborút” [Jewish Big Capital Caused the World War]. *A Nép*, 23 December 1924, 3–4.

3 Iván Héjjas (1890–1950 or 1951), landowner in Kecskemét, punitive detachment commander, politician. He served as an officer in World War I, retiring as a reserve first lieutenant. After the war, he was one of the leaders of the counter-revolutionary movements in the Kecskemét area. As commander of a National Army military police unit, he was responsible for the massacres carried out between the Danube and Tisza rivers. He and his men also took part in the 1921 uprising in western Hungary, and he was one of the leaders of the Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete (ÉME—Association of Awakening Hungarians). Between 1927 and 1931, he was a member of parliament for the Hungarian National Independence Party, commonly named as Fajvédő Párt (Racial Protection Party). He played a nominal role in the 1938–1939 Subcarpathian small war. After World War II, he settled in Spain, where he died. Bodó, “Iván Héjjas, The Life of a Counterrevolutionary,” 247–79; Kántás, *Héjjas Iván paramilitáris vezető és különítménye*.

4 “A magyar feltámadás útján a keresztény nemzeti gondolat jegyében” [On the Path to Hungarian Resurrection, in the Spirit of Christian Nationalism]. *Szózat*, 23 December 1924, 2.

5 Gál, Imre. “Az ébredő kongresszuson botrányos jelenetek közben inzultálták az *Esti Kurír* munkatársát” [In Scandalous Scenes at the Awakening Congress, a Staff Member of *Esti Kurír* was Insulted]. *Esti Kurír*, 23 December 1924, 1–3.

6 On the alleged rivalry between Eckhardt and Héjjas, who represented the most extreme elements in the organisation: “Cselekvő Magyarok Héjjastól kértek védelmet a rendőrséggel szemben”

banquet when, following a toast, the police launched an investigation against an unknown perpetrator on charges of contempt of Regent Miklós Horthy.<sup>7</sup> Eckhardt probably did not know about the investigation the next day when he reported on the association's annual activities to the general meeting. He correctly stated that in 1924 the focus was on developing the organisational structure, which he believed the government had hindered by prohibiting university students (as well as college and high school students) from joining, and sought to keep civil servants away from the ÉME through a confidential decree. As suggested by Eckhardt, the congress decided to send Hitler a telegram "greeting him on the occasion of his release from captivity."<sup>8</sup> The Bavarian delegate, who was none other than Kurt Lüdecke, who also gave a presentation to the assembly entitled "An Introduction to Related German Movements," listened to all this with great pleasure.<sup>9</sup> The Nazi envoy praised by Eckhardt tried to skirt the debacle of the Beer Hall Putsch with a rhetorical sleight of hand, while watching the Hungarian movement's show of force with envy. Afterwards, behind closed doors, he tried to convince Gyula Gömbös,<sup>10</sup> who was more sceptical, and in this case somewhat more realistic than Eckhardt, that he was serious about Hitler's unbroken chances of coming to power.<sup>11</sup>

What were the strengths and profile of this Hungarian organisation apparently capable of bringing together several factions of the extreme right wing? Who was the highly capable president, Tibor Eckhardt, who had to navigate between the far-right political ecosystem that had developed in the early 1920s and the Horthy-era government elite, which had already begun to consolidate and had joined the League

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[Active Hungarians Asked Héjjas for Protection against the Police]. *Esti Kurir*, 6 January 1925, 1–2; "Héjjas Ivánt akarják vezérekknek a cselekvő ébredők" [The Active Awakening Movement Wants Iván Héjjas as Their Leader]. *A Mai Nap*, 6 March 1925, 3.

- 7 Eckhardt suspected that István Lendvai's toast was misinterpreted, as he did not mean to refer to the governor who excused himself from the congress when he said that "it is not enough for Christian society to be with us in spirit and thought, but it must also bear witness to its convictions through deeds". Cp. "Eckhardt garantálja, hogy az ÉME-vel kapcsolatban nem lesz több rendzavarás és bombamerénylet" [Eckhardt Guarantees that There Will Be No More Disturbances or Bomb Attacks Related to the ÉME]. *Esti Kurir*, 30 December 1924, 5.
- 8 "A magyar feltámadás útján a keresztény nemzeti gondolat jegyében" [On the Path to Hungarian Resurrection, in the Spirit of Christian Nationalism]. *Szózat*, 23 December 1924, 1–4; Cp. MNL OL P2249. *Az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének alapszabályai és fegyelmi rendtartása*. Budapest, 1924, 30.
- 9 "Sorakozó az ébredő gondolat mellett" [Lining Up Alongside the Awakening Thought]. *A Nép*, 19 December 1924, 6.
- 10 Gyula Gömbös (1886–1936), military officer, far-right politician, one of the first presidents of MOVE. He was the leader of the Hungarian racialists and then Prime Minister of Hungary between 1932 and 1936.
- 11 Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 242–44.

of Nations, led by Prime Minister István Bethlen?<sup>12</sup> In addition to these simpler questions, we should also understand who Kurt Lüdecke was, how he came to Budapest, and what he was doing at the most important event of the Awakening Hungarians. In my study, which summarises Tibor Eckhardt's activities as president of the ÉME between 1923 and 1927, based on the available Hungarian and foreign-language literature, the contemporary press and archival sources, I will highlight, after providing a background to the Hungarian context, the transnational ideological and institutional network in which the ÉME operated, an organisation that usually features primarily in connection with its activities in Hungary. Therefore, I place particular emphasis on describing the international embeddedness of the ÉME and mapping the contemporary far-right networks, pointing out that the connections they established in the early 1920s, during the heyday of early radicalism, continued to function in the middle of the decade, albeit with some changes. This was despite the fact that these years—marked by the names of Gustav Stresemann, Ignaz Seipel, and István Bethlen—are usually interpreted as a period of the consolidation and strengthening of the right-wing centre. However, a closer look at the period also reveals that the far-right movements' reserves of strength were soon exhausted, and that by the second half of the decade, the large networks had worn themselves out. At the same time, the transnational dimension of the ideology remained very much intact: even in their marginalised state, in Hungary the ÉME and Eckhardt were among the main sources of the discourse promoting the applicability of Italian Fascism in Hungary. In this respect, they paved the way for the general right-wing radicalisation of the 1930s.

The ÉME was formed during the Hungarian democratic revolution of 1918 and came to the attention of the wider public in January 1919.<sup>13</sup> Initially, its main objective was to preserve (and later regain) Hungary's historical borders. In addition, members of this far-right association were characterised by vociferous anti-Semitism and a counter-revolutionary 'White' sentiment that was later common to the movement. The ÉME developed into a social base for the Hungarian counter-revolution led by Miklós Horthy, who came to power in the autumn of 1919. It was a genuine mass organisation, although partly due to its size, the membership was not homogeneous. And the issue of legal continuity with regard to the office of the monarchy in Hungary also divided their ranks. In addition to the free electors (i.e., the anti-Habsburg camp) closely associated with Regent Miklós Horthy, the legitimists, who stood on the ground of Habsburg legal continuity, also played an important role in the ÉME. In March 1920, i.e., at the time of Horthy's election as governor, the well-known legitimist György Szmrecsányi even became the president of the

12 In detail: Romsics, I., *Bethlen István*, 276–377.

13 "Az »Ébredő Magyarok« gyűlése a Gólyavárban" [The Gathering of the 'Awakening Hungarians' in Gólyavár]. *Alkotmány*, 21 January 1919, 6.

organisation.<sup>14</sup> The question of the legitimate ruler, which emerged as a major watershed divide, was still secondary at that time. The issues that united the membership proved more significant: monarchism, irredentism, and anti-Semitism.

Tibor Eckhardt, a prominent politician in the free electors and the racialist movement, was already a member of the ÉME in October 1921, at the time of the break between the free electors and the legitimists, i.e., during Charles IV's second attempt at returning to Hungary.<sup>15</sup> Between 1920 and the summer of 1922, the young politician, who had become related to the Regent through his first marriage in 1913, headed the press department of the Prime Minister's Office. Given the nature of press control at the time, this was a fairly extensive portfolio—in contemporary terms, he may be called a “press dictator”—while at the same time putting his conspiratorial skills to the test meddling in the White International around 1920.<sup>16</sup> The initially pro-government racialist group lost much of its political weight after the consolidation of the government's powers and the 1922 elections. Thus, in the summer of 1922, Prime Minister István Bethlen was able to part ways with his press secretary, who had been heavily attacked by the opposition and who could console himself with a seat in the National Assembly (which he had won before his departure). The conflicts between the racialists, who were unwilling to come to terms with the consolidation process, and the government did not subside afterwards. In fact, in August 1923, the radical group broke away from the ruling party, and in October 1924 founded the Hungarian National Independence Party, commonly known as the Racial Protection Party (Fajvédő Párt). The leader of the opposition party was Gyula Gömbös, with Tibor Eckhardt as his second in command.

During the early counter-revolutionary period, the ÉME was synonymous with white terror,<sup>17</sup> then with the street violence that continued throughout 1922–1923, and with various far-right conspiracies. The threads also led to the ÉME in connection with the 1923 “Ulain Coup,” an abortive offshoot of the early Bavarian Nazi conspiracies, and Tibor Eckhardt himself was also compromised in this matter. Although the liberal opposition demanded that the ÉME should be banned because of the terrorist acts, and the government occasionally made gestures and promises in this regard, a thorough investigation and public scrutiny of the association's early years was not at all in István Bethlen's interest.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the association, which

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14 Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora*, 56.

15 *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 27, 316–18 (19 November 1924).

16 Romsics, G., *Összeomlás és útkeresés*, 532.

17 Bodó, *The White Terror*.

18 The complicated relationship between the ÉME and the government is reflected in the recurring but never fully clarified issue of the weapons left behind in the association's premises. *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 19, 384–86 (23 January 1924); *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 27, 316–18 (19 November 1924).

was operating in a rather uncoordinated manner and had seen better days, was experiencing an internal crisis.<sup>19</sup> István Pálóczy-Horváth, the national president, resigned in the summer of 1923 and was replaced by a five-member steering committee, including Pál Prónay and Iván Héjjas.<sup>20</sup> The Minister of the Interior obliged the association to elect a new leadership and draw up new statutes or face a ban, but the renewal of the association kept being delayed.<sup>21</sup>

Eckhardt, the former press secretary, was elected national president at the ÉME's national assembly on 16 December 1923. "Without waiting for the question of whether he would accept the nomination, the audience stood up and celebrated Tibor Eckhardt at length," whom Iván Héjjas announced as the new national president. In his inaugural speech, the new president promised to devote "all his activities" to the association and launched a lengthy tirade against the Jews and Freemasons, setting himself the goal of winning the trust of the working class. "[W]e must cooperate with the triumphant Fascism led by Mussolini, Spanish Prime Minister Primo de Rivera, who launched the fight against corruption in Spain [...], and our Bavarian swastika-wielding comrades," said the president of the social association, who was confident that "the first congress of the White International" would be held in Budapest. The politician, who was not yet affiliated with any party at the time, committed himself to "strictly keeping party politics away from the association" and expected iron discipline and the avoidance of "individual actions" (i.e., atrocities) from its members. The general meeting finally accepted the statutes amended.<sup>22</sup>

It is quite possible that Eckhardt consulted with certain members of the government about the conditions under which the association would operate,<sup>23</sup> but the new president of the Awakening Hungarians did not arrive at the headquarters on Sörház Street as Bethlen's liquidator.<sup>24</sup> On the contrary: he wanted to forge a political hinterland out of the *pro forma* depoliticised ÉME, similar to what Gömbös had done earlier with MOVE.<sup>25</sup> However, Eckhardt's presidency could not have started

19 According to a police report dated 10 December 1945, the association's stronger rural groups, concentrated in large cities, at one time had "tens of thousands of members." BFL VI.15.c 1. small box (26). Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete elnevezésű feloszlott egyesület adatai.

20 "Az Ébredők Héjjast és Prónayt választották vezéreiknek" [The Awakened Chose Héjjas and Prónay as Their Leaders]. *A Nép*, 19 June 1923, 2.

21 "Eckhardt Tibor lesz az Ébredők elnöke" [Tibor Eckhardt Will Be the President of the Awakened]. *Esti Kurir*, 16 December 1923, 3.

22 "A keresztény, integer Magyarország az ébredő programm" [Christian, Greater Hungary: The Awakening Program]. *A Nép*, 18 December 1923, 3.

23 Serfőző, "A titkos társaságok és a konszolidáció," 35.

24 Later, he himself expressed this opinion. Kádár Lynn, *Eckhardt Tibor amerikai évei*, 43.

25 Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula és a hatalom*, 153–64.

worse,<sup>26</sup> because no sooner had he been elected than another assassination attempt shook the country. On 26 December 1923, a bomb exploded at a ball held by the Jewish Women's Association in Csongrád, injuring several people and killing a guest and a waitress. Once again, the clues led to the ÉME and Iván Héjjas.<sup>27</sup> Immediately after the incident, calls for the dissolution of the ÉME intensified,<sup>28</sup> and Eckhardt distanced himself from the attack.<sup>29</sup> His move proved successful, as the association's amended statutes were approved by the minister of the interior in February 1924.<sup>30</sup>

In subsequent months, Eckhardt fulfilled his promise and devoted almost all his energy to the ÉME. He began a nationwide reorganisation<sup>31</sup> and, according to a 1925 propaganda article, spent five to six hours a day at the headquarters dealing with the association's affairs.<sup>32</sup> According to an enthusiastic article by Lehel Kádár, within a year the association had "transformed into a large, well-structured organisation capable of mobilising huge crowds, the likes of which no other country in Europe except the Fascist state could boast."<sup>33</sup> While the president proclaimed that "the Association of Awakening Hungarians was not a political association,"<sup>34</sup> it did in fact openly acknowledge its political goals, such as defending the Numerus Clausus Law that restricted the admission of Jewish students to higher education.<sup>35</sup>

26 For Eckhardt's aims, cp. "Az ÉME megújódása" [The ÉME Revival]. *Szózat*, 18 December 1923, 1.

27 Kántás, ed., *A csongrádi bombamerénylet*, 46–47.

28 Cp. "Csongrád" [Csongrád]. *Világ*, 29 December 1923, 1.

29 "Eckhardt Tibor a merényletről és a liberális offenzíváról nyilatkozik A NÉP-nek" [Tibor Eckhardt Comments on the Assassination Attempt and the Liberal Offensive in an Interview with *Nép*]. *A Nép*, 1 January 1924, 3.

30 MNL OL P2249, ÉME. *Az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének alapszabályai és fegyelmi rendtartása*. Budapest, 1924.

31 MNL PML XIV.2.a. 6. box, 72. pallium, 3–4. Letters from Tibor Eckhardt to László Endre. August 4 and August 6, 1925. Endre was chief magistrate of Gödöllő at the time, and his name was associated with radical anti-Semitic measures and social policy developments. During the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, Endre, as State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, was one of the main figures responsible for the deportation of Hungarian Jews. In 1946, he was sentenced to death and executed. Vági, *Endre László*.

32 e. e.: "Látogatás az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületében" [Visit to the Association of Awakening Hungarians]. *Szózat*, 20 August 1925, 1.

33 Kádár, Lehel. "Ébredő magyarság és nemzet" [The Awakening of Hungarian Identity and Nationhood]. *Szózat*, 21 December 1924, 2. For the reasons mentioned above, a "close correlation" can be observed between the new leadership of ÉME and the prominent figures of the later Racial Protection Party. Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora*, 183.

34 *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 37, 126 (1 December 1925).

35 "Eljön a pillanat, amikor összetörünk minden árulót" [The Moment Will Come when We Crush All Traitors!]. *A Nép*, 17 February 1925, 3–4. Eckhardt was an honorary *dominus* of

## The ÉME in far-right continental networks

However, the ÉME served not only as a political springboard for the president, but also as a domestic bastion for the White International's plans, which were not abandoned even after 1920. From Sörház Street, the Austrian–Bavarian–Hungarian conspiracy could also be developed in the direction of Italy, as the three leaders of the association had already made contact with the Fascists striving for power in Italy in July 1921.<sup>36</sup> In the summer of 1924, the new president of the ÉME travelled to Paris, London, and Rome on a four-week “study trip,”<sup>37</sup> during which he “established contact with the leaders of similar organisations in Western countries.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, he attended an anti-Semitic congress in Paris, which was convened to “organise the White International,” as Lüdecke recalled in his memoirs.<sup>39</sup> Lüdecke was a dubious character, who made his wealth through fraud. He saw an opportunity in the emerging National Socialist movement and sought connections and capital for Hitler primarily abroad.<sup>40</sup> In the last week of August 1923, he had already visited Budapest on Hitler's behalf to secure foreign policy support for the planned far-right coup in Germany. Lüdecke came into contact with Hungarian racialists, including Eckhardt, while working to deepen relations between Mussolini and Hitler.<sup>41</sup> One of the driving forces behind the 1924 initiative was Umberto Benigni, an Italian Fascist priest and journalist with a university chair, who operated an anti-modernist network of Italian Fascists, French Catholics, Russian *émigrés*, Spanish monarchists, British ultra-Tories, and German National Socialists under the name *Intesa Romana di Difesa Sociala* (Roman Social Defence Agreement). He maintained contacts in Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Egypt, Canada, the United States, Romania, and

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the Werbőczy Fraternal Association, which brought together law students of the broader Turul Association, the largest and markedly right-radical student association of the time. Cp. “Verbőczy B. E. tb. dominuszai-nak felavatása” [Inauguration of Verbőczy B. E. tb. as Dominus]. *A Nép*, 20 March 1925, 10.

36 On Tibor Herkély, Egon Turchányi and Pál Lipovniczky's trip to Italy: MNL OL P2249 Series 7/3. AZ ÉME története, 10.

37 “Eckhardt Tibor külföldi tanulmányútra ment” [Tibor Eckhardt Went Abroad on a Study Trip]. *Szózat*, 2 July 1924, 6.

38 “Eckhardt Tibor az ÉME választmányi ülésén beszámolt külföldi útjáról” [Tibor Eckhardt Reported on His Trip Abroad at the ÉME Board Meeting]. *Szózat*, 17 September 1924, 3.

39 Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 231–32.

40 Smith, Jr.: *Kurt Lüdecke*, 597–99.

41 Thoss, *Der Ludendorff-Kreis*, 471–75; Fenske: *Konservativismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 130; Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 128–29. On Lüdecke's characterisation: Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris*, 316–17. Lüdecke later continued his dubious business dealings and National Socialist agitation in the United States, then returned to Germany after Hitler had come to power, where he was arrested. On his release, he returned to the USA. Fischer, *Hitler & America*, 26.

Hungary. Between 1923 and 1926, this secretive network organised international anti-Semitic conferences in Rome, Paris, Salzburg, and Budapest.<sup>42</sup>

Another key figure in contemporary anti-Semitic internationalism, alongside Benigni, was Georg de Pottere, a retired diplomat of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, who founded the Aryan-Christian Cultural Association in Vienna around 1923.<sup>43</sup> The series of conspiratorial, secretly organised European conferences, in which Eckhardt and the ÉME also participated, began with the meeting Pottere organised in Vienna on 11–13 March 1921. At the 1921 Vienna conference, it was decided that a “world congress” would be convened in Budapest in September of that year for the “protection of Christian nations,” but at that time this did not take place. Instead, in 1923, with Benigni’s effective cooperation, a “study conference” was held in Rome on “research into the Jewish question,” followed by a meeting in Paris at the end of June 1924, attended by Eckhardt. Its participants issued a joint statement declaring that the materialistic Jewry operated as a secret organisation with the aim of world domination.<sup>44</sup>

In order to continue organising, the Hungarian politician travelled from the French capital to London with Lüdecke—who had been convicted of blackmail in Munich a few months earlier.<sup>45</sup> In London, Eckhardt spoke with “friends of the Hungarian cause,” such as Lord Newton and the editors of *The Morning Post* and *The Times*.<sup>46</sup> Of these, *The Morning Post* was also disseminating the Judeo-Bolshevik myth, thus could be counted amongst ideological allies.<sup>47</sup> From London, Eckhardt travelled on to Rome. Here, too, he was able to spend his time usefully, thanks to the “comradely agreement” concluded between the leadership of the ÉME and the “presidium of the Italian Fascists,” as phrased by Hungarian newspaper reports. In the second half of September 1925, a twelve-day “pilgrimage” to Italy at a discount price was advertised for ordinary members of the association, signalling the tighter

42 Valbousquet, “Transnational Antisemitic Networks,” 59–61. There is also data on an international conference with a similar theme held in Florence in 1923. Brechtken, “Madagaskar für die Juden,” 31, 37.

43 De Pottere lived in Budapest during World War II. On his adventurous life: Benz, ed., *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 2/1, 649–50.

44 Hagemeister, *Die ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’ vor Gericht*, 68–70. Representatives of the ÉME participated in the 1921 Vienna Conference on behalf of Hungary. At their suggestion, Budapest was designated as the next venue, and following their proposal, a decision was made to establish a “Christian World Alliance” to be managed from Budapest. É.M.E. *Hivatalos Tudósító*, 15 April 1921, 15.

45 Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 232; Smith, *Kurt Lüdecke*, 599; Eckhardt’s and Lüdecke’s joint journey is mentioned in: Schubert, *Die Anfänge der nationalsozialistischen Aussenpolitik*, 188.

46 *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 43, 106 (10 May 1926). On Lord Newton: Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat*, 114, 164.

47 Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe*, 18, 30, 34.

links.<sup>48</sup> The president of the ÉME did not miss the anti-Semitic congress de Pottere organised in Salzburg in April 1925, which was also attended by three leading Nazi politicians, Alfred Rosenberg, Heinrich Himmler, and Ernst Boepple, in addition to Lüdecke, Benigni, and the White Russian *émigré* leader Biskupsky.<sup>49</sup> For all these reasons, Miklós Kozma, the head of the Hungarian Telegraph Office called Eckhardt a member of the “interparliamentary international anti-Semitic alliance.”<sup>50</sup>

The ÉME published its own international bulletin. *The Courrier Danubien/Donaukurier* was intended to help build foreign contacts. Published at least weekly in French and German (and “when necessary” also in English and Italian), a lithograph “reproduced in limited numbers on a copying machine” and distributed abroad, it also sought to connect Hungary to the “anti-Bolshevik international network.” Editors even approached Prime Minister István Bethlen to request support for their initiative. Pál Lipovniczky was listed as the publisher, Tibor Eckhardt as the editor-in-chief, and the ÉME headquarters at 3 Sörház Street served as the “temporary” headquarters of the periodical. According to the association’s notary, in the mid-1920s, the ÉME’s lithograph was shipped to 250 newspapers and organisations.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, according to the German ambassador to Rome, by mid-August 1925, another visit by ÉME representatives to Rome had become “imminent.”<sup>52</sup>

In late September 1925, Eckhardt was organising a “confidential” conference with the participation of nationalist and anti-Semitic organisations from twelve countries. He was also expecting representatives of Hungarian students to attend the meeting. A letter by Eckhardt confirms that he had been “in constant contact with the invitees for years.”<sup>53</sup> He had indeed spent several months organising the

48 “A tegnapi ellenfelek – a mai barátoknak és – a holnapi testvéreknek” [Yesterday’s Opponents—Today’s Friends and Tomorrow’s Brothers]. *A Nép*, 29 July 1925, 4; “»Mindenki adja meg a fejbőségét! A nyakbőségét is!«” [“Everyone Give Your Head Size! And Your Neck Size Too!”] *Népszava*, 7 August 1925, 3.

49 Hagemester, *Die ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’ vor Gericht*, 71. Biskupsky was one of the key figures in the 1920 Bavarian–Austrian–Hungarian–Russian military cooperation experiment in Budapest. Kolontári: *Szélhámosok, kalandorok, fantaszták*, 218–23.

50 MNL OL K429 small box 47. Amerika 1921–1926, 102. Letter from Miklós Kozma to Vilmos Mayer, 27 May 1925.

51 MNL OL P2249 Series 7. Letter from an unknown author to István Bethlen, 9 June 1925. MNL OL P2249 Series7/3. Az ÉME története, 18.

52 Németh, *Magyarok és németek (1914–1934)*, 614. The planned journey to Rome is confirmed by a letter from Tibor Eckhardt to László Endre, 29 August 1925. MNL PML XIV.2.a. 6. box, 72. pallium, 6.

53 Letter from Tibor Eckhardt to Béla Oláh, 23 September 1925. Facsimile published in: Falus, Ferenc. “A Cuza-Eckhardt-Gömbös kongresszus titkaiból” [Secrets of the Cuza–Eckhardt–Gömbös Congress]. *Az Est*, 7 February 1926, 5.

conference held in Budapest between 3 and 6 October 1925. The press reported on the preparations,<sup>54</sup> and there were several preliminary meetings abroad.<sup>55</sup> The *Esti Kurir* was the first Hungarian newspaper to report on the Budapest event, which was attended by Benigni and de Pottere,<sup>56</sup> highlighting that Professor Alexandru Cuza, the anti-Semitic “prophet” of the Romanian far right, was also present.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps Eckhardt even recalled his own family memories of Czernowitz and Radautz in conversation with Cuza, the professor of political economy from Iași, whose obsessive antisemitism may have impressed him. That said, the Romanian professor’s ethno-nationalism was not confined to Jews, and his xenophobia also amply extended to the Hungarian minority, which represented a problem for Eckhardt’s circle and the broader public alike.<sup>58</sup> After the publication of a critical article in the liberal *Esti Kurir*, the radical mouthpiece *Szózat* was forced to say that the event was no more than a “private” meeting in the Hungarian capital, with guests coming “on behalf of the entire civilised world.” The participants also agreed that “their peoples were not each other’s enemies, that all nations have only one enemy, the [...] Jewish power.” In order to jointly fight this “Jewish power,” they issued a written agreement (signed by Tibor Eckhardt on the Hungarian side). Subsequently, the national ÉME leadership decided to “immediately establish contact with the anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik organisations of the two neighbouring countries [meaning Austria and Romania].”<sup>59</sup> De Pottere also proposed the establishment of an international anti-Semitic office based in Vienna, which he immediately undertook to lead.<sup>60</sup>

54 “Eckhardt Tibor A NÉP és a SZÓZAT kultürestéjén bejelentette, hogy legközelebb összeül a nacionalisták nemzetközi kongresszusa Budapesten” [Tibor Eckhardt Announced at the Cultural Evening of *Nép* and *Szózat* that the Next International Congress of Nationalists Will Be Held in Budapest]. *A Nép*, 28 April 1925, 5. Cp. “Ez már döfi! Vagy a nacionalisták internacionális kongresszusa Budapesten” [That’s Awesome! Or the International Congress of Nationalists in Budapest]. *Népszava*, 28 April 1925, 13.

55 MNL OL P2249 Series 7/3. Az ÉME története, 18.

56 Forno, “Comunisti, ebrei e massoni,” 89; Heinen, ‘*Arhanghelului Mihail*,’ 304.

57 “Nemzetközi titkos antiszemita kongresszus volt Budapesten, melyen a román Cuza professzor is résztvett” [There Was an International Secret Anti-Semitic Congress in Budapest, which Was also Attended by Romanian Professor Cuza]. *Esti Kurir*, 13 October 1925, 3.

58 Cuza protested against the inclusion of a section protecting minorities in the Romanian constitution. Cp. Gombos and Neumann, “Antisemitizmus és numerus clausus,” 160. On Cuza’s anti-Semitism, which combined cultural and biological as well as anti-Judaistic approaches: Trencsényi, *A nép lelke*, 135–38; Miskolczy, *A Vaszgárda*, 21–22. Tibor Eckhardt’s paternal grandfather, Wilhelm Eckhardt, was born in Radautz (Rădăuți) and attended secondary school in Czernowitz (Chernivtsi). ÖStA KA CL UR 8. 1853. Karton 623.

59 “Az antisemitizmus és antibolshevizmus európai vezérei a magyar fővárosban” [European Leaders of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Bolshevism in the Hungarian Capital]. *Szózat*, 14 October 1925, 1–2.

60 Hagemester, *Die ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’ vor Gericht*, 72.

On the Romanian side, it was the short-lived but important far-right organisation Alexandru Cuza founded in 1923 under the name Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine (National Christian Defence League) that was represented at the Budapest congress.<sup>61</sup> The party founder was accompanied by the ultra-nationalist Romanian student leader Ion I. Moța, who by then had already committed a politically motivated murder.<sup>62</sup> The third delegate was Corneliu Șumuleanu, a chemistry professor who, like Moța, later joined the leadership of the Iron Guard.<sup>63</sup> General Wrangel's namesake, Baron Constantin Wrangel, a leader of the Russian colony in Hungary during World War II, also checked into one of the hotels used by the guests.<sup>64</sup> The Budapest meeting was attended by Russian *émigré* General Aleksandr Nechvolodov, who had also appeared at the 1924 Paris conference, and Jules Molle, the anti-Jewish politician and mayor of French-ruled Algiers.

The German contingent was more significant. Eckhardt's invitation was accepted by Theodor Fritsch, the doyen of German *völkisch* anti-Semitism, Ulrich Fleischhauer, who specialised in publishing anti-Semitic work, and Ernst Boepple, who ran a Nazi publishing company. Fritsch had participated in the first international anti-Semitic congress in Dresden as early as 1882 (!), while Fleischhauer was one of the main propagandists of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, who, after the National Socialists had come to power, founded the *Welt-Dienst* propaganda and news agency together with de Pottere, intended to be a "supranational aid and information office."<sup>65</sup> An NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) leader, Alfred Rosenberg was also present at the Budapest conference. The Nazi politician with Baltic roots was the most important ideologue of National Socialism and one of the initiators of the White International between 1920 and 1923. After Hitler had been released from prison on 20 December 1924, Rosenberg devoted all his time to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, of which he was editor-in-chief, and to the magazine *Der Weltkampf*, which he founded in mid-1924 to deal specifically with the Jewish

61 To this organisation: Iordachi, "Charisma, Politics and Violence," 38.

62 MNL OL P2249-7-2. Kivonat az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének 1925. évi október 7-én tartott igazgatósági ülésének jegyzőkönyvéről [Summary Minutes of the Association of Awakening Hungarians Directors' Meeting on 7 October 1925].

63 Cârstocea, "Native Fascists, Transnational Anti-Semites," 221.

64 "Cuzát és társait mint irredentákat szállásolta el az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének titkára a Bristolban" [Cuza and His Companions Were Accommodated as Irredentists by the Secretary of the Association of Awakening Hungarians in Bristol]." *Esti Kurir*, 17 October 1925, 2. On Wrangel: ÁBTL 3.1.6.-P-432, 179-180; 3.1.6.-P-431, 37-41; 3.1.6.-P-110, 23; 26. I would like to thank Attila Kolontári for his help in identifying Constantin Wrangel.

65 *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 2/1, 235-36, 259. *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 5, 644-46.

question.<sup>66</sup> On 20 October 1925, after being listed among the participants, Rosenberg wrote an editorial in the *Völkischer Beobachter* about the anti-Semitic conference in Budapest. He called the event a “personal meeting”, which Eckhardt disguised as an ornithological congress. In the same article, Rosenberg outlined the need to deport European Jews, mentioning Uganda as a possible destination.<sup>67</sup> However, according to his later recollections, Madagascar was chosen at the Budapest conference.<sup>68</sup> What seems certain is that the plan for deportation to Madagascar, which was originally conceived in one of Paul de Lagarde’s 1885 articles, was revived during the series of the international anti-Semitic conferences held between 1921 and 1925.<sup>69</sup>

All this should not blind one to the difficulties of working out shared positions between the various platforms of the European far right. There was the question of race—and Hungary’s racist leaders themselves tended to reflect the complex Central European origins of the Hungarian population, German and Slovak ancestors being especially common. Perhaps influenced by this or by the realities of “Christian” Hungary, the concept of race tended not to be reduced to the notion of biological descent. Eckhardt’s article in a 1926 German-language volume, which compiled the writings of “anti-Semitic leaders of nations” such as Rosenberg, highlighted these disagreements. The president of the ÉME, who represented his country in the volume, does not mention Hungary’s revisionist goals here, but claims that the Hungarian people need to fight only against the Jews in order to liberate themselves. Eckhardt, quoting sociologist Gustave Le Bon, also argued that due to centuries of continuous intermarriage, it is no longer possible to speak of race among civilised peoples in a biological sense. “Only with mutual respect and mutual understanding—and not with chauvinism striving for superiority—can we successfully defend the legitimate demands of nationalist groups in a peaceful and sincere manner against the international revolutionary movement,” he wrote in 1926.<sup>70</sup> However, this thesis was incompatible with National Socialist ideology. The NSDAP and its leader consistently rejected the idea of internationalist nationalism in the first half of the 1920s.<sup>71</sup> As

66 Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg: Hitlers Chefideologe*, 84–88. On Molle: Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 132–35. On Rosenberg: Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism*, especially ch. 1–2. On Fritsch, other participants in the Budapest congress, alleged plans, and conflicts: “A budapesti antiszemita »világkongresszus« nemzeti diktatúrák kikiáltását határozta el Közép-Európa államaiban” [The Anti-Semitic ‘World Congress’ in Budapest Decided to Proclaim National Dictatorships in the States of Central Europe]. *Világ*, 21 April 1926.

67 A. R.: Der “Raubvögel” Kongreß in Budapest. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 20 October 1925, 1.

68 Hagemeister, “Die »Protokolle der Weisen von Zion« vor Gericht,” 72.

69 Brechtken, “Madagaskar für die Juden,” 16, 31–38.

70 Eckhardt, “Internationaler Nationalismus,” 47–52. (The text is a revised version of his speech delivered at the 1924 national assembly of ÉME.)

71 Szinai, *Antiszemita internacionálé*, 16.

early as 1920, Hitler had already made the superiority of the Nordic race party doctrine, a thesis that was propagated first and foremost by one of Eckhardt's National Socialist acquaintances, Alfred Rosenberg.<sup>72</sup> Published in two volumes in 1926, *Mein Kampf* envisioned a worldwide struggle of the superior "Aryan" race against inferior races, above all "the Jews."<sup>73</sup> The position of the Hungarian people in this hierarchy was unclear. While such disagreements did not destroy the anti-Semitic cooperation outright, they represented areas of (potential) conflict and may at least partially account for the divergent paths many of the movements took in the 1930s.

However, the pro-government, liberal, and social democratic Hungarian press did not take issue with Rosenberg's presence, but rather with that of the Romanian participants,<sup>74</sup> and focussed especially on Eckhardt, who at that time was accusing the Hungarian Social Democrats of being influenced by foreign powers.<sup>75</sup> The president of the ÉME proudly accepted responsibility for inviting Cuza, which the racialist newspapers sought to defend,<sup>76</sup> while Hungarian-language newspapers in Romania were already reporting that Gömbös and Eckhardt would be speaking at Cuza's upcoming public event in Oradea (Nagyvárad, Großwardein).<sup>77</sup> This was too much to bear in the revisionist Hungarian public climate of the day. Predictably, the cooperation came to nought. In fact, the anti-Semitic international was fraught with several conflicts of interest,<sup>78</sup> and although a conference was held in Denmark in 1926 (with Hungarian participation), there is no data on any significant gatherings

72 For a contemporary quote from Hitler, see: Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 23–24, 29.

73 Hitler: *Mein Kampf, I–II*; Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris*, 400–04.

74 Cp. e.g., "Magyar fajvédők barátkozása román magyarfalókkal" [Hungarian Racialists Befriending Romanian Hungarian-Haters]. 8 *Órai Ujság*, 15 October 1925, 3; "Eckhardték a magyar gyűlölő román vezérrel" [Eckhardt's Circle with the Hungarian-Hating Romanian Leader]. *Az Est*, 15 October 1925, 3–4; "Cuza barátai és szövetségesei" [Cuza's Friends and Allies]. *Népszava*, 15 October 1925, 8.

75 "Eckhardt Tibor két arca a mentelmi bizottság és az antiszemita konferencia tükrében [The Two Faces of Tibor Eckhardt in Light of the Immunity Committee and the Anti-Semitic Conference]." *Pesti Napló*, 15 October 1925, 7; *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 35, 78 (20 October 1925); vol. 35, 160 (22 October 1925). "Eckhardt az ülésterem helyett a folyosón védekezett a Cuza-ügyben" [Eckhardt Defended Himself in the Corridor Instead of in the Chamber in the Cuza Affair]. *Pesti Napló*, 17 October 1925, 6.

76 Cp. e.g., "Az új fajvédők" [The New Racialists]. *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 16 October 1925, 1.

77 "Csörög a szarka, vendég jön" [The Magpie is Chirping, a Guest is Coming]. *Szamos*, 26 November 1925, 1; "Betiltották a Cuza-Eckhardt találkozást" [The Cuza–Eckhardt Meeting Was Banned]. *Aradi Közlöny*, 29 November 1925, 5.

78 Valbousquet, "Transnational Antisemitic Networks," 77–78. The fact that, in addition to the Hungarian race protectors, Schager and Teufel also appeared to be compromised in the counterfeiting of francs may have contributed to the decline of the organisation cp. "A frankhamisítás bécsi epilógusa" [The Vienna Epilogue of the Franc Forgery Case]. *Hirlap*, 12 December 1926, 4.

in the last years of the 1920s.<sup>79</sup> As for Eckhardt, his position became completely untenable after the Budapest conference had been exposed. The scandal further eroded the political prestige of the Racial Protection Party and, at the same time, the president of the ÉME,<sup>80</sup> especially after Eckhardt's excuse attempts in parliament turned into a physical altercation, almost witnessed by former British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald, who was to visit the session.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the Romanian delegation, there were other surprise guests at the Budapest conference. The front page of the “democratic opposition” *Mai Nap* announced in bold letters that “Gömbös and his followers have made a pact with the imperial legitimists.”<sup>82</sup> Considering the Austrian participants' background, in fact, this statement was not entirely unfounded. The most prominent person in the circle was Albin Schager von Eckartsau, former property manager of Charles, the abdicated emperor and king, and an important figure in the 1921 attempts to restore the monarchy. At this time, Schager was already considered a semi-schismatic legitimist insofar as he placed *völkisch* interests for the unification of all Germans in one empire above dynastic considerations in his Conservative People's Party.<sup>83</sup> During the Budapest conference, on 5 October 1925 Schager met with Miklós Kozma, whom he tried to persuade to support the National Socialist *Deutschösterreichische Tages-Zeitung*.<sup>84</sup> At the anti-Semitic congress—which was also attended by his party colleague, Oskar Teufel<sup>85</sup>—he allegedly proposed that Central Europe should be divided between the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Wittelsbachs. According to this idea, the Hohenzollerns would return to the throne of the German Empire, while the Austrian crown would go to Otto of Habsburg, who would be ruled by Crown

79 “Der Internationale Antisemitenkongress.” *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, 22 August 1926, 2; Hagemester, *Die 'Protokolle der Weisen von Zion' vor Gericht*, 73.

80 Cp. press interpretations of the anti-Hungarian atrocities in Oradea (Nagyvárad) in December 1927, e.g.: “A román fajvédők és a magyar fajvédők” [Romanian and Hungarian Racialists]. *Népszava*, 11 December 1927, 1–2. Regarding ÉME: “Egyesületi életünk megbénult, anyagilag tönkremen [sic!], romokban hever az ÉME – mondják az aggódó ébredők” [Our Association Life Has Come to a Standstill, We Are Financially Ruined, ÉME Lies in Ruins – Say the Worried Awakened Ones]. *Esti Kurir*, 20 December 1927, 5.

81 “Gömbös Gyula és Fábíán Béla összeverekedtek a Ház mai ülésén” [Gyula Gömbös and Béla Fábíán Got into a Fight at Today's Session of the House]. 8 *Órai Ujság*, 21 October 1925, 3.

82 “Gömbösék lepaktáltak a császári legitimistákkal” [The Gömbös Faction Made a Pact with the Imperial Legitimists]. *A Mai Nap*, 18 October 1925, 1. Schager and Eckhardt's alliance is caricatured in: “Nepos: Schagers diplomatische Sendung.” *Der Morgen* (Vienna), 26 October 1925, 5.

83 Fiziker, *Habsburg kontra Hitler*, 36.

84 MNL OL K429. small box 46. Az MTI bécsi tudósítójával való levelezés, 1920–1926. Letter from Albin Schager von Eckartsau to Miklós Kozma, 10 November 1925.

85 Szabó, “Wessen Feind,” 220.

Prince of Bavaria, Rupprecht until he came of age. Schager intended the throne of Hungary to go to Albrecht, in accordance with the wishes of his hosts in Budapest.<sup>86</sup>

While the president of the Conservative People's Party, Albin Schager bombarded the widowed Queen Zita with his memoranda to no avail,<sup>87</sup> he forged ever closer ties with the Hungarian racialists.<sup>88</sup> In early March 1926, he returned to Budapest, where, after dining with Gömbös and Eckhardt, his memoranda were published by the radical daily *Szózat*.<sup>89</sup> Press reports stated that the racialists would indeed have supported the accession to the Hungarian throne of Archduke Albrecht, who had been elected governor-president of the Federation of Social Associations (Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége) in November 1925 and who, according to their plans, together with Rupprecht and the former German Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, could have begun redrawing the map of Europe by implementing the Anschluss.<sup>90</sup> Although the racialists rejected this combination,<sup>91</sup> the 1925 national congress of the ÉME, with the support of the governor, Mussolini, and Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, nevertheless considered it important to send a letter of homage to the Archdukes Joseph and Albrecht—the Habsburgs living in Hungary.<sup>92</sup>

86 Szemere, Pál. "A reakció közép európai diktatúrája. II" [The Dictatorship of Reaction in Central Europe. II]. *Miskolci Napló*, 11 March 1926, 3.

87 In 1926, Schager and Gömbös wrote a joint memorandum to Queen Zita, arguing that the Anschluss was inevitable. Fiziker, *Habsburg kontra Hitler*, 36–38.

88 Szemere, Pál. "A reakció közép európai diktatúrája. III" [The Dictatorship of Reaction in Central Europe. III]. *Miskolci Napló*, 12 March 1926, 3.

89 "Schager báró tegnap a fajvédő vezérekkel vacsorázott [Baron Schager Had Dinner with the Leaders of the Racialists Yesterday]." *8 Órai Ujság*, 4 March 1926, 2. According to the liberal newspapers, Schager's trip to Budapest was supposed to be part of another Bavarian–Austrian–Romanian congress in Budapest, which, however, did not happen due to the lack of interest on the part of Rupprecht and Cuza. See, for example, Szemere's articles under fn. 87 and 89. "Zita exkirályné még mindig az összmonarchia gondolatkörében él" [Former Queen Zita Still Lives in the Spirit of the Monarchy]. *Szózat*, 4 March 1926, 3; "»Szent István koronájának viselője nemzeti királynak és csakis annak tekintheti magát«" ["The Bearer of St Stephen's Crown May Consider Himself the National King and Only the National King"]. *Szózat*, 5 March 1926, 3; "IV. Károly egyik fia sem jut trónra, ha a Habsburg-ház nem szakít a nemzetek feletti császárság gondolatával" [None of Charles IV's Sons Will Ascend to the Throne unless the House of Habsburg Abandons the Idea of a Supranational Empire]. *Szózat*, 6 March 1926, 3.

90 "Készülődnek a Kalandorkirályságra" [Getting Ready for the Kingdom of Adventure]. *Népszava*, 19 November 1925, 3–4. According to an Austrian police report dated 15 October 1925, Schager, who was flirting with the Nazis, supported Albrecht's claim to the throne in Hungary and even in Austria, in collaboration with a faction of the ÉME. Fiziker, *Habsburg kontra Hitler*, 37.

91 "»Olyan király után vágyódnék, aki Budavárában lakik«" ['I Long for a King who Lives in the Buda Castle']. *Szózat*, 21 November 1925, 5.

92 "Az ÉME üdvözlő okiratot küldött Mussolininak, a Kormányzóknak, József és Albrecht királyi hercegeknek, valamint Prohászka Ottokár püspöknek" [The ÉME Sent a Letter of Welcome to

## Eckhardt in decline: spokesman for Italian Fascism

However, some members of the ÉME felt that even the renewed association, which organised international anti-Semitic conferences, was not anti-Jewish enough. István Lendvai, at least, publicly justified his resignation by saying that it had “deviated from anti-Semitic thinking.”<sup>93</sup> It is possible that Lendvai was more annoyed by the promised and actually implemented crackdown on violent radicals,<sup>94</sup> the success of which was acknowledged by Interior Minister Iván Rakovszky.<sup>95</sup> These signs certainly indicate that dissatisfaction with the president was growing within the association, as he was playing ping-pong with “Jews” despite his fierce anti-Semitism.<sup>96</sup> The conflicts were exacerbated by personal rivalries and differences of opinion, for example on the question concerning the monarchy—which, as we have seen, resulted in numerous combinations—and in a guessing game about the ideal relationship between the Racial Protection Party and the ÉME.<sup>97</sup> Eckhardt tried to demonstrate strength. “We are not staging a coup [...]. But if the other side wants to stage a coup, we will be there!”—he threatened, but his bluster was a symptom of failure.<sup>98</sup>

Opposition media outlets reported that at the end of 1925 only a few hundred people attended the ÉME’s national congress, which was combined with a flag consecration ceremony.<sup>99</sup> According to a lengthy article in *Szózat*, no larger plans were discussed at the event, which focused on the usual topics.<sup>100</sup> In addition, two

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Mussolini, the Governor, Prince Joseph and Prince Albrecht, and Bishop Ottokár Prohászka]. *Szózat*, 30 December 1925, 7.

93 *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 41, 61. (26 March 1926).

94 In his report from Cegléd, Lendvai stated that “right-wing terror will stand up to left-wing terror.” Lendvai, István. “Szamueli kése megjelent a legnagyobb közjogi méltóság kezében” [Samueli’s Knife Appeared in the Hands of the Highest State Dignitary]. *Szózat*, 10 November 1925, 2.

95 *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 31, 155–59. (18 March 1925).

96 Eckhardt’s ping-pong battle with Baron György Ullmann and János Zwack, among others, caused a great stir in the press. Endrődy, ed., “Társas élet,” 44.

97 In addition to the Lendvai case, see: “Eckhardt lemondattja Petrichevichet, az Ébredők lemondattják Eckhardtot” [Eckhardt Dismisses Petrichevich, the Awakened Dismiss Eckhardt]? *Magyarország*, 10 December 1925, 1; “Cselekvésre készülnek az ébredők és a fajvédők – Klebelsberg gróf vezérlete alatt” [The Awakened and the Racialists Are Preparing for Action – Under the Leadership of Count Klebelsberg]. *Világ*, 6 January 1926, 6. Eckhardt tried to refute this: “Nyilatkozat [Declaration].” *Szózat*, 26 January 1926, 6.

98 “Legitimisták és szabad királyválasztók elismeréssel nyilatkoznak Bethlen tegnapi beszédéről” [Legitimists and National Monarchists Express Appreciation for the Speech Bethlen Made Yesterday]. *8 Órai Ujság*, 27 November 1925, 5.

99 *Esti Kurir*, 22 December 1925, 1. “Nagy kudarc az Ébredők díszgyűlésén” [Major Setback at the Awakening Party’s Gala Meeting]. *Friss Ujság*, 20 December 1925, 7.

100 “A jövő a fajvédelemé” [The Future Belongs to Racialists]. *Szózat*, 22 December 1925, 1–3.

other mainstream Awakening Hungarians leaders, Lehel Kádár and Pál Prónay, left the association alongside Lendvai.<sup>101</sup> Many people were repelled by the dictatorial proceedings of Béla Rákóczi, Eckhardt's trusted confidant, who was known to have a crude manner as executive director of the ÉME.<sup>102</sup> The board tried to ease the tension by "clearly delimiting" Rákóczi's powers, while Eckhardt appointed another confidant, Ferenc Balogh, as his deputy to handle administrative matters.<sup>103</sup> They tried to entice Prónay, Lendvai, and Kádár to return—but without much success.<sup>104</sup> In fact, another stalwart, Menyhért Kiss, who was averse to the national president's influence-building and had already left the Racial Protection Party because of its alleged pro-government stance, also resigned from the association. Eckhardt initiated disciplinary proceedings against Kiss because he had sent a condolence letter to the widow of Vilmos Vázsonyi, a recently deceased prominent Jewish democrat.<sup>105</sup>

Eckhardt continued to visit the ÉME member organisations conscientiously, but it is telling that on 15 March 1926, the association "celebrated with a warm, comradely dinner" the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution, which was only reported in a single-column article on page 10 of the formerly servile *Szózat*.<sup>106</sup> The ÉME found itself on the verge of bankruptcy, embroiled in scandals,<sup>107</sup> and at the end of the

101 "Lendvai és Kádár »lezárták az ébredőség aktáit«" [Lendvai and Kádár 'Closed the Files on the Awakening']. *Esti Kurir*, 14 January 1926, 7; "Nyilatkozat" [Declaration]. *Uj Nemzedék*, 31 January 1926, 8.

102 Cp. e.g.: "Az ÉME villamosvasúti szakcsoportja ki akar válni az egyesületből" [The ÉME Tramway Section Wants to Leave the Association]. *Pesti Napló*, 22 January 1926, 8.

103 "Eckhardt Tibor nyilatkozik az ÉME ügyvezetéséről" [Tibor Eckhardt Comments on the ÉME Management]. *Uj Nemzedék*, 6 February 1926, 3.

104 "Az ÉME erélyesen tiltakozik a Központi Anyagbeszerző felállítása ellen" [ÉME Strongly Protests Against the Establishment of the Central Procurement Agency]. *Magyarság*, 31 March 1926, 6.

105 "A keresztény eszme annyira szent, hogy nem szükséges a pártpolitika kedvéért Kun Béla bűnei miatt megtaposni Vázsonyi Vilmos hantjait – írja levelében az Éméből kilépő Kiss Menyhért képviselő" [The Christian Ideal is so Sacred that It Is Not Necessary to Trample on Vilmos Vázsonyi's Grave for the Sake of Party Politics because of Béla Kun's Crimes, Writes in His Letter Menyhért Kiss, a Representative who Left ÉME]. *Esti Kurir*, 23 October 1926, 5.; "Valahányszor kemény harcra került a sor: a fajvédő párt nem megbuktatni, hanem megmenteni igyekezett a kormányt" [Whenever There Was a Tough Battle, the Racial Protection Party Tried to Save the Government rather than Bring It Down]. *Esti Kurir*, 10 February 1926, 2.

106 "A MOVE és az ÉME márciusi ünnepsége" [MOVE and ÉME Celebrations in March]. *Szózat*, 17 March 1926, 10.

107 Németh, Károly. "Az Ébredők Egyesülete, amely súlyos anyagi válsággal küzd, nem akar Gömbösök karjaiba esni, de esetleg szanálná magát a legitimistákkal" [The Association of the Awakened, Which in a Serious Financial Crisis, Does Not Want to Fall into the Arms of Gömbös and His Followers, but It May Seek Assistance from the Legitimists]. *Esti Kurir*, 12 May 1926, 9. "Az ÉME ügyésze azt vallotta a bíróság előtt, hogy a BSzKRT burgonyaüzletre

year, was forced to move from its headquarters on Sörház Street.<sup>108</sup> Returning “suntanned” from the shores of Lake Balaton,<sup>109</sup> in the autumn the president switched to campaign mode before the general election, and once again had a daily newspaper defending the interests of the racialists, using *Magyar Ujság*, the successor to *Szózat*.<sup>110</sup> In addition to press agitation, Eckhardt also led a delegation of miners from Salgótarján dressed in black uniforms and presenting social policy demands to Minister of Social Policy József Vass. He then visited the mining town, where the miners “saluted with raised hands” the delegation from Budapest.<sup>111</sup> It is not insignificant in the context of the hallmarks of fascistisation, that the “Eagle” (Sas) section of the ÉME, which was linked to Eckhardt and Rákóczi and had to receive special permission from the minister of the interior<sup>112</sup> received military-style training and, in addition to protecting strike-breaking workers, also carried out intelligence, surveillance and counter-espionage activities both within and outside the country’s borders.<sup>113</sup>

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kölcsönt adott az Émének” [The Prosecutor for ÉME Testified in Court that the Budapest Public Transport Company (BSzKRT) Had Granted a Loan to ÉME for Its Potato Business]. *Esti Kurir*, 1 June 1926, 9. “A debreceni ébredők »testvérharca« a bíróság előtt” [The Internecine Fight of the Debrecen Awakened].” *Pesti Napló*, 10 September 1926, 4.

- 108 Németh, Károly. “Megszűnt a sörház utcai fellegvár, a villamoskalauzok is otthagyták az ÉME-t, az ébredők összevesztek Budayékkal és rettegnek Héjjas Iván előre látható parlamenti kudarcától” [The Stronghold on Sörház Street Has Been Dismantled, the Tram Conductors Have also Left ÉME, the Awakened Have Fallen Out with the Budays, and they Fear Iván Héjjas’s Predictable Parliamentary Defeat]. *Esti Kurir*, 25 December 1926, 20.
- 109 “A Ripka-párt hozzájárul Sipőcz Jenő polgármesterségéhez” [The Ripka Party Supports Jenő Sipőcz’s Candidacy for Mayor]. *Magyar Ujság*, 8 September 1926, 1.
- 110 “A salgótarjáni bányászok fascista ingben és ÉME díszjelvénnel jelentek meg Vass miniszter előtt” [The Miners of Salgótarján Appeared before Minister Vass Wearing Fascist Shirts and ÉME Insignia]. *Szegedi Uj Nemzedék*, 2 October 1926, 4; “A salgótarjáni ébredő »sasok«, akik – mint mondják – lecsapni készülnek a szocialista »csókák«-ra, ma feketeinges kosztümben megjelentek Vass József miniszter előtt” [The Awakening ‘Eagles’ of Salgótarján, who, as They Say, Are Preparing to Strike Down on the Socialist ‘Magpie,’ Appeared Today in Black Uniforms before Minister József Vass]. *Esti Kurir*, 2 October 1926, 13. Cp. “A fajvédők éles támadása a szénbányavállalatok ellen” [Sharp Attack by Racialists Against Coal Mining Companies]. *Magyarság*, 24 September 1926, 1.
- 111 “Ezerhatszáz bányász az ébredő lobogó alatt” [One Thousand Six Hundred Miners Under the Awakening Flag]. *Magyar Ujság*, 19 October 1926, 1.
- 112 BFL IV 1402b, 1927/2310. Decree of the Minister of the Interior on the supervision of the activities of the Eagles Sports Section of the Association of Awakening Hungarians. Cp. e.g.: “Buday Dezső, az ébredők új elnöke kitiltotta az ÉME-ből Rákóczit, Zsabkát és a többi »renitens sasokat»” [New President of the Awakening Movement Dezső Buday, Expelled from the ÉME Rákóczi, Zsabka, and the Other ‘Rebellious Eagles’]. *Magyar Hírlap*, 28 December 1927, 1.
- 113 Paksy, *Nyilas mozgalom Magyarországon*, 59.

Clearly, the president's enthusiasm for fascism did not wane with the years. He continued to regularly quote or cite Mussolini as an example to follow,<sup>114</sup> sent a certificate of honour to the Fascist dictator on behalf of the ÉME,<sup>115</sup> and at the association's general meeting in June, planned to speak about the "the salvation of the nation through the forces of Fascism."<sup>116</sup> Only before the parliamentary elections did he try to tone down his rhetoric, slipping into blatant self-contradiction at times. In Miskolc, for example, he spoke about how Fascism was not necessarily a dictatorial and authoritarian system.<sup>117</sup> He visited the factory town for clear political reasons, and it is indeed difficult to view the ÉME's large gatherings in the autumn of 1926 as anything other than campaign events at which FP politicians sought to mobilise their supporters and strengthen their party's support. The elections showed, however, that the mobilisation met with little success. Eckhardt also left parliament. In addition, the president was charged with "mismanagement of ÉME funds and other [...] serious allegations,"<sup>118</sup> so that at the annual general meeting in January 1927, it was no longer possible to hide "personal disputes." The leadership offered their resignation in a theatrical gesture, only to immediately confirm the president in his position during the re-election. Although it was considered a great success that, with the support of the National Central Credit Union, cooperative branches had been established,<sup>119</sup> in reality, the association was struggling with

114 Cp. e.g.: *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 42, 230. (30 April 1926); *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 42, 279 (4 May 1926); vol. 46, 107 (30 October 1926).

115 "Eckhardt Tibor átadta az olasz követnek az ÉME Mussolininek küldött díszoklevelét" [Tibor Eckhardt Presented the Italian Ambassador with the ÉME's Letter of Commendation to Mussolini]. *Szózat*, 21 March 1926, 16.

116 "Az Ébredők június havi beszámoló nagygyűlése" [The Awakening's Monthly June General Meeting]. *Magyarság*, 18 June 1926, 10. He did not give his speech, citing family reasons. Cp. "Naplopónak, Sigray gróf lovának két percig kell elszaladni a Király-díjért, az ébredőknek azonban Zsirkay szerint esetleg hatvan évig kell loholniuk" [Count Sigray's Horse Naplopó, Has Two Minutes to Run for the King's Prize, but According to Zsirkay, Members of the Awakening Movement May Have to Struggle for Sixty Years]. *Esti Kurir*, 22 June 1926, 9.

117 "Legitimizmus, szabadkirályválasztás, fasizmus a felekezeti ellentétek és a munkásság problémája az ÉME miskolci és vasgyári nagygyűlésén" [Legitimist Movement, National Monarchism, Fascism, Denominational Conflicts, and the Problem of Labour at the ÉME General Assembly in Miskolc and at the Iron Works]. *Magyar Jövő*, 9 November 1926, 2–3.

118 Regarding Prónay's statement: "Prónay Pál és Kádár Lehel kijelentik, hogy őket nem buktathatták ki az ÉME elnökségből, mert – nem is tagjai az egyesületne" [Pál Prónay and Lehel Kádár Declare that They Could Not Be Removed from the ÉME Presidency because They Are Not Even Members of the Association]. *Magyar Hírlap*, 18 January 1927, 3.

119 "Az ÉME szétbontotta a nemzetközi szociáldemokrácia egységét" [The ÉME Broke Up the Unity of International Social Democracy]. *Magyar Ujság*, 18 January 1927, 3. It should be noted that the sporting life of the MOVE, led by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, also flourished from the mid-1920s onwards. Lajkó, "A Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület," 59.

declining membership fees and supported itself by operating a cinema in Budapest and another one in Debrecen.<sup>120</sup>

Eckhardt himself had major financial problems at the time: he exchanged his five-room rented flat in Budapest on the elegant Múzeum boulevard for a two-room flat in Balatonföldvár, and then “passed his supplementary law exams with distinction.”<sup>121</sup> In his student years, he had planned to pursue a career in public administration and therefore only took the state exams in public service and policy, but now he planned to supplement his falling income as a lawyer. In fact, from the autumn of 1927, he was working as a trainee lawyer in Ferenc Ulain’s office.<sup>122</sup> Even before that, his name appeared in the news as the administrator of the fabulous Szemere estate, because István Szemere, the heir who married the daughter of a former Eckhardt associate, Károly Halmos, entrusted him with the settlement of the inheritance. “My main goal is to preserve an ancient Hungarian fortune. In short, I want to turn foreign financial assets into Hungarian real estate.” This is how the president of the ÉME, who happened to be a guest at the wedding, summarised his lofty goals.<sup>123</sup>

Even after his election defeat, Eckhardt visited the organisations and rallies conscientiously—he had more time due to his lack of parliamentary commitments. He still promoted the successes of Italian Fascism in Pécs, Debrecen, Eger, and Szeged, concealing in this manner his own failure.<sup>124</sup> But different winds were blowing, with

120 Based on the official correspondent of ÉME, see: “Miből él az ÉME, amely fokosokon tavaly százötvenezer koronát keresett és elégtétellel számol be Rákosi Jenő elítéléséről?” [How does ÉME, which Earned 150,000 Crowns from Tomahawks Last Year and Reports with Satisfaction the Conviction of Jenő Rákosi, Make a Living?] *Esti Kurir*, 19 January 1927, 7. MNL OL K429 small box 14. “Parlamenti választások, 1926. Információ.” 15 November 1926.

121 “Vidékre költözött Eckhardt Tibor” [Tibor Eckhardt Moved to the Countryside]. *Ujság*, 26 May 1926, 8; “Hírek mindenfelől [News from All Over]. *A Mai Nap*, 26 June 1926, 2.

122 *Budapesti Közlöny*, 18 September 1927, 1.

123 “Eckhardt Tibor érdekes nyilatkozata Szemere István házasságáról és a több százmilliárdos Szemere-vagyonról” [Tibor Eckhardt’s Interesting Statement about István Szemere’s Marriage and the Szemere Fortune Worth Hundreds of Billions]. *A Mai Nap*, 5 August 1927, 2. Eckhardt and the high-profile Francophile adventurer had known each other for a long time. Cp. e.g.: Halmos’ letter addressed to his “Sweet Tibor”. Vienna, 9 April 1920. MNL OL K66, 1920 – I. 6, 39. For Halmos’ portrait: Ablonczy, “Rettenetes év,” 12–13. The fortune came from István Szemere’s uncle Miklós Szemere (1856–1919), founder of the far-right magazine *A Cél*. Cp. Godinek, “Fajvédő eszme,” 40–58.

124 “Az ÉME vidéki gyűlései” [Rural Meetings of ÉME]. *Magyar Ujság*, 15 April 1927, 10; “A debreceni ÉME követeli a magyar munkatörvényt” [The Debrecen ÉME Demands Hungarian Labour Law]. *Magyar Ujság*, 24 May 1927, 6; “ÉME hírei.” *Magyar Ujság*, 3 June 1927, 3; “A polgári társadalom és a magyar munkás együttes működése teremtheti csak meg Nagymagyarországot” [Only the Joint Efforts of Middle-Class Society and Hungarian Workers Can Create Greater Hungary]. *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 14 June 1927, 1.

the revision of Hungary's Trianon borders raised in the conservative British press. When he returned from his trip to Paris and London in the autumn of 1927, the black-shirted Eagles marching in his honour were certainly confused by the news of the changed direction of cooperation with the former enemies. Only when Eckhardt committed himself to "the cult of Hungarian power, the strengthening of Hungarian national defence" and "Hungarian militarism" could they relax a little.<sup>125</sup> He continued to emphasize his unwavering integrity and revisionism to the Eagles, *inter alia* in the speech he made on tour in Sátoraljaújhely.<sup>126</sup> But the contradiction was too great to conceal. Hungarian Fascism could not be organised with a French and English orientation even if some leading figures in the United Kingdom seemed ready to support the cause of Hungarian revisionism. On the other hand, the radical tone was not advantageous for the head of government, who was negotiating at the League of Nations in Geneva. Initially, the police even refused to allow the ÉME to hold its national congress in Miskolc. When the event was finally approved, it was broken up by the police because Eckhardt insisted on discussing sensitive foreign policy issues.<sup>127</sup> Eventually, on 15 December 1927, the president announced his resignation to the board. Allegedly, he was discouraged by a leaflet circulated in the ÉME against Béla Rákóczy.<sup>128</sup> "I see complete chaos," summarised the issue of the association's management Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, who at the same time resigned from the leadership of MOVE.<sup>129</sup> In this chaos,<sup>130</sup> which naturally also affected the Racial

125 "A magyaroknak nincsenek jó politikusai, de jó katonái vannak – mondotta Rothermere lord Eckhardt Tibornak" [Hungarians Lack Good Politicians, but they do have Good Soldiers, Lord Rothermere Said to Tibor Eckhardt]. *Magyarság*, 2 October 1927, 8.

126 "We, the awakening Hungarians, will never give up the separated territories. We have one ideal, and that is Greater Hungary," he said. Cp. "»A magyar nemzetnek sokkal jobbak a katonái, mint a politikusai« – mondotta Rothermere" ["The Hungarian Nation Has Much Better Soldiers than Politicians," Said Rothermere]. *Magyar Jövő*, 29 November 1927, 3.

127 "A rendőrség megvonta a szót Eckhardt Tibortól az ébredők miskolci kongresszusán, mire a kongresszus feloszlott" [The Police Silenced Tibor Eckhardt at the Congress of the Awakening Movement in Miskolc, Whereupon the Congress Was Dissolved]. *Magyar Jövő*, 6 December 1927, 1–2; "Az ébredők miskolci kongresszusán rendőri beavatkozás vetett véget Eckhardt Tibor szélsőséges beszédének" [Police Intervention Put an End to Tibor Eckhardt's Extreme Speech at the Awakened Congress in Miskolc]. *Reggeli Hírlap*, 6 December 1927, 5.

128 MNL PML XIV.2.a. Box 6, pallium 72, 21. Letter from Tibor Eckhardt to László Endre. 4 January 1928; "Eckhardt Tibor lemondott az ÉME elnökségéről" [Tibor Eckhardt Has Resigned from His Position as ÉME President]. *Magyarság*, 18 December 1927, 3.

129 MNL OL K429. small box 14. Zsilinszky. Budapesti lapok, 60. Letter from Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky to Miklós Kozma, 17 December 1927; Bartha, *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre*, 137.

130 For more on the scandal-ridden succession issue, see, for example: "Az ÉME igazgatósága Rákócziék ellen határozott és Buday Dezsőt erősítette meg az egyesület vezetésében" [The Board of ÉME Took a Firm Stance Against the Rákóczi Circle and Confirmed Dezső Buday as the Association's Leader]. *Magyar Hírlap*, 30 December 1927, 1–2.

Protection Party, Gyula Gömbös returned to the ruling party, while Tibor Eckhardt became the executive director of the “pacifist” Hungarian Revisionist League.<sup>131</sup> This can be seen as the beginning of his long journey toward the political mainstream.<sup>132</sup>

## Conclusion

Tibor Eckhardt’s time at the helm of the ÉME illustrates the contradictions of the early far right in the Horthy era. In the counter-revolutionary political ecosystem that emerged after the collapse in 1918–1919, within a few years the ÉME was building a national mass organisation and an international network of contacts from its symbolic and, in some cases, very real base of “white terror.” Eckhardt’s 1923 election as president was accompanied by promises of reorganising the ÉME, coupled with “political rehabilitation,” although internal divisions and excessive ambition quickly undermined these achievements.

As a prominent figure in the racist free-election group, Eckhardt sought to reconcile the logic of government consolidation with the programme of radical nationalism. It could be regarded as his success that under his presidency, after the assassination in Csongrád, there were no similar terrorist acts linked to the association compromising his political goals. Because although he called the ÉME a “non-political association,” its activities were clearly political: defending the *numerus clausus*, linking anti-Semitic movements, and promoting Fascism as a model were at the centre of its activities. As ÉME president, many of his foreign partners were politicians. Domestically, Eckhardt cherished the vision of a disciplined, modern mass organisation, but the ÉME membership was heterogeneous and difficult to control. The association was weakened by rivalries within the leadership, financial abuses, and opposition to the charismatic leadership style. In the years following 1925, the mass base melted away, and the ÉME stayed in public life in a more symbolic sense. Thus, Eckhardt’s Fascist sympathies and his attempts to introduce foreign models did not lead to a political breakthrough.

His connections with the Italian and German far right (Benigni, Lüdecke, Rosenberg) show that after the period of the “White International,” the ÉME wanted to fit into the reconfigured transnational network of the far right, and the 1925 conference in Budapest was a spectacular but risky result of this endeavour, even

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131 OSZK Kt. Fol. Hung. 2734. Revíziós Liga. vol. IV, 99. Statement by Ferenc Herczeg, undated. For more information about the Revisionist League of Hungary, see: Zeidler, “A Magyar Revíziós Liga.”

132 In the 1930s, Eckhardt became the leader of the Smallholders’ Party and a well-known anti-Nazi politician in Hungary. In 1941, he emigrated to the United States, where he organised the Independent Hungary movement.

if today we know that international anti-Semitic cooperation was to remain fragmented, burdened by conflicts of interest, and short-lived. At the same time, the study highlights that the activities of the ÉME offer a rich repository of examples of cooperation of the far right not only in Hungary but also in Europe. The international newsletter *Courrier Danubien*, ongoing correspondence, and conferences turned the Sörház Street centre into the Hungarian hub of a diverse right-wing extremist international network. This network of contacts later provided a refined language and rhetoric for the radicalism of the 1930s. The slogans of “national defence,” “racial purity” and “Christian Europe” became firmly established in the Hungarian political imagination, partly through the work of Eckhardt and his colleagues. Eckhardt’s resignation in 1927 marked the end of a process: the attempt at far-right cooperation proved unviable in the consolidated authoritarian system. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the legacy of the ÉME—its racist rhetoric, its demand for the application of Fascist models in Hungary, and its experience in transnational networking—made a lasting impact on the subsequent development of the Hungarian right wing.

The study also argues that the history of the ÉME under the presidency of Tibor Eckhardt is better understood from the perspective of transnational historiography. Between 1923 and 1927, the association did not operate as an isolated Hungarian phenomenon, but as a hub of a broader, interconnected European radical right-wing space. Its trajectory clearly shows that the mobilisation of the far right in Central Europe after World War I was not due not only due to domestic political developments, but was also the consequence of the cross-border, multidirectional movement of individuals, ideas, and organisational models. The ÉME attempted to localise foreign models while exporting its own racist and Christian-nationalist rhetoric. Eckhardt’s leadership was a product of this interaction. Building on his previous experience as a press chief and government official, as well as his connections in Vienna, Bavaria, and Italy, he sought to position the Hungarian radical right as a productive and important part of a broader, transnational new ideological grouping. He was influenced by the discipline of Italian Fascism, the language of German *völkisch* thinking, and the Romanian and Austrian discourse on “Christian Europe.” At the same time, he regarded the Hungarian far-right tradition as valuable and as a reflection of universally valid (and therefore exportable) experiences. These interactions were therefore never mere imitation: the Hungarian political milieu localised and reinterpreted the influences through its own traumas—Trianon, the desire for revision, the monarchist tradition. From this perspective, the 1925 anti-Semitic congress in Budapest was not an episode, but a space of interaction, where different national radicalisms temporarily met and mutually shaped each other. At the same time, it seems that the conspiracy was primarily based on personal relationships, and there was a lack of mass support for more serious institutional cooperation.

The participants faced insurmountable obstacles due to the ongoing social consolidation, economic reconstruction, and political stabilisation, which all strengthened the political mainstream. After the turbulent years following the Great War, Hungary successfully integrated into international politics. This period of calm came to an end with the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s. The congress also revealed the limits of far-right transnational convergence: national conflicts, denominational differences, and divergent imperial ambitions shattered the possibility of cooperation, and the following years proved that without the driving force of major economic and political processes, the far right was unable to maintain its influence in the long term. The tide only turned in the 1930s.

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