

■ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies

**Documenting Life
and Destruction**
Holocaust Sources
in Context

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DOCUMENTING LIFE AND DESTRUCTION

HOLOCAUST SOURCES IN CONTEXT

This groundbreaking series provides a new perspective on history using first-hand accounts of the lives of those who suffered through the Holocaust, those who perpetrated it, and those who witnessed it as bystanders. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies presents a wide range of documents from different archival holdings, expanding knowledge about the lives and fates of Holocaust victims and making these resources broadly available to the general public and scholarly communities for the first time.

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Documenting Life and Destruction
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THE HOLOCAUST IN HUNGARY

Evolution of a Genocide

Zoltán Vági, László Csósz, and Gábor Kádár

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DOCUMENT 2-9: Introduction to and articles of Act XIV of 1942 on the Modification and Extension of Act II of 1939 on National Defense and Act IV of 1938 on the Recognition of the Achievements of Combat Veterans of the 1914–1918 World War, in 1942. *évi Országos Törvénytar* (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Belügyminisztérium, 1943), 76–89.

[. . .]

The bill upholds the principle that Jews cannot perform armed service in the Hungarian army and must fulfill their military obligations through auxiliary military service. This principle and the declaration and implementation thereof with respect to the Hungarian army ensures uniformity with the provisions of the so-called “Jewish Laws,”⁸⁵ which are intended to secure the exclusion of the Jews from government, as well as public employment, and keep them from assuming the intellectual leadership of the country. Thus, no argument or extended explanation is needed to justify this bill’s goal that the Jews should likewise be excluded from the armed sections of the Hungarian army. After all, the individual and the corporate life of the armed forces is the primary realm in which in every respect the requirements of the Hungarian national movement and the Christian moral conception must prevail uninterruptedly.

84. Proposal of Presidential Department “A” of the Ministry of Defense, April 4, 1939, in Karsai, “*Fegyvertelen álltak az aknamezőkön,*” 1:14–21.

85. See chapter 1.

It would, however, be misguided to opt for a decree that at this time would remove the Jews' military obligations, specifically, their obligation to serve in the army, and would thereby relieve them of the associated burdens. For this reason, auxiliary military service within the Hungarian army is the area in which training Jews can be of public utility; it is here that their physical disciplining and moral education can be carried out afterward with results that are—hopefully—not unfavorable from the public's point of view.

[. . .]

§ 3

(1) Jews do not receive “levente” training.⁸⁶

(2) Jews who are subject to compulsory military service cannot perform armed service in the Hungarian army or in the gendarmerie.

[. . .]

§ 5

(1) Jews subject to compulsory military service will fulfill their military obligations through auxiliary military service.

(2) Those assigned to perform auxiliary military service will do so without rank or arm badge,⁸⁷ even if they previously held the rank of a commissioned officer or noncommissioned officer, or junior noncommissioned officer, or wore an arm badge; they may not sign up for reserve officer training. [. . .]

[. . .] A few days after I assumed my duties, I already saw that the Jewish question was one of the toughest and gravest of problems that manifested all of its features within the army. [. . .] Labor Service companies were established for the Jews. The recruitment was not by age group, however, but with rounds of the so-called “SAS” call-up summons: “Hurry, Immediately, Hurry.”⁹⁰ This gave rise to abuse of the gravest form. If someone had a conflict with a Jew, he would handle it by having that person called in for labor service, regardless of the person’s age or social status.

This anti-Jewish sentiment reigned in the Ministry of Defense. And this sentiment became even more extreme as a result of the order regulating military duty relief from battlefield service. The order declared that Romanians, Serbs, and Jews were not allowed any form of preferential treatment and could not be relieved of their duties. [. . .]

Had the higher-ranking commanders supervised their deputies, making them feel that their superiors did not regard the labor servicemen as having been sentenced to death, as pariahs consigned to the ranks of animals, then the cruelties that led to the death of so many labor servicemen on Russian fields would have stopped or would not have happened at all. [. . .]

Jewish members of the workforce were removed at many firms due to pressure from military agencies, particularly Department 17/a of the Ministry of Industry. During these operations, even the department of mobilization of the Ministry of Defense was used. As a result, shortages arose at every juncture. For example, following my resignation, the production of rocket launchers only began after an eight-month delay; Jewish skilled workers in the machine industry had been removed from the factories, and it took a long time before new workers were recruited and trained.

The case of doctors is instructive here: Jewish doctors were called in without any deliberation. While the order specified that only one

89. Karsai, “*Fegyvertelen álltak az aknamezőkön,*” 2:330–37.

90. In Hungarian: *siess, azonnal, siess*. It meant that those who received the summons had to report for duty within a very short time.

doctor could be assigned to each Labor Service company, which consisted of about 220 men, it still happened on several occasions that 10 to 12 doctors ended up serving in a single unit. And instead of saving lives, they were assigned to ordinary physical labor. Meanwhile, some villages remained wholly without a doctor. Military units also experienced a shortage. As a result, many Hungarians in active combat did not receive appropriate treatment or medical assistance fast enough; many died because of minor injuries because trained doctors were elsewhere, breaking stones, digging trenches, cutting down forests, carrying lumber, working in railroad construction, or sweeping mines in front of the lines.

[. . .]

I would receive reports of the brutal treatment day after day. In many places, the Labor Service guards went wild—unfortunately, the reserve company commanders followed suit—they introduced such cruel treatment that decent Hungarian soldiers were appalled and filed reports. Because of the beatings, the extremely strenuous work, and the lack of adequate food, many labor servicemen died. These atrocities were established during military court investigations, and I tried as best I could to put an end to them.

[. . .]