

■ 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

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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

Foreword by Randolph L. Braham

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DOCUMENT 4-15: Telegram of Reich Plenipotentiary in Hungary Edmund Veesenmayer to Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop, July 6, 1944, in IMT, NG-5523 (translated from German).

In response to my telephone inquiry, I have received word from Sztójay just now that the Regent, apparently after consultation with the Hungarian government, has halted further actions concerning Jews [*Juden-Aktionen*]. [. . .] He explained his reasoning:

1. The Hungarian government has established that no special measures were carried out against the Jews in Romania, and the government of

94. Draft of a statement by the regent, June 26, 1944, in Karsai, *Vádirat a nácizmus ellen*, 3:3–6.

95. For the contents of the decision, see Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 2:875–77.

96. *Ibid.*, 2:838–40.

the Reich has also tolerated that the problem of Jews was treated relatively generously there.

2. In Slovakia, too, there are still thousands of Jews, especially Christian Jews, living under the protection of Tiso,⁹⁷ to which the government of the Reich has agreed.⁹⁸

3. It became known through enemy radio broadcasts that the Jewish-Hungarian millionaires arrived in Lisbon; this fact has created a huge sensation throughout Hungary and has raised doubts about the just and consistent treatment of the Jewish question in Hungary.⁹⁹ After all, if Jews can with the help of the SS escape to neutral countries, then the Regent as well as the Hungarian government should try to ensure that the special wishes of individual neutral countries are taken into account when alleviating the Jewish question in Hungary. It is through such gestures that they are at the moment trying to blunt the force of the ongoing general anti-Hungarian agitation, all the more so because the neutral states are of great importance to Hungary in other respects.

4. A barrage of telegrams, appeals, and threats has been directed at the Regent and the Hungarian government because of the Jewish question. Thus the Swedish king and the Pope have both sent several telegrams.¹⁰⁰ The Papal Nuncio visits the Regent and Sztójay several times a day.¹⁰¹ And similar actions are being taken by the Turkish and Swiss

97. Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), Slovak politician, was head of the Nazi puppet state from 1939 to 1945.

98. In terms of its Jewish policy, Hungary did pay attention to the moves of its allies, especially those of neighboring states that it regarded as rivals.

99. In May, the SS went behind the Hungarian government's back and confiscated the Manfréd Weiss Works, which was the largest military production plant in central Europe not yet in German hands. In exchange for transferring the shares to the Germans, they allowed the owners of Jewish origin to take their families and immigrate to Portugal. See Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Aranyvonat. Fejezetek a zsidó vágyon történetéből* (Budapest: 2001, Osiris), 155–68. After the contract was signed on May 17, thirty-two members of the Weiss and Chorin families were taken to Vienna. They flew in a special Lufthansa plane to Lisbon, arriving on June 25. See Szinai and Szűcs, *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai*, 443–44; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 2:886–87. Tensions in German-Hungarian relations arose when the incident became public. From early June on, the Hungarian government made several unsuccessful attempts to protest the deal. See Veesenmayer's report of June 14, 1944, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Juhász et al., *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország*, 866–67.

100. On the Swedish king, see documents 4-13 and 4-14; the pope was Pope Pius XII (1939–1958).

101. **Angelo Rotta**. On Rotta, see the glossary. The papal nuncio is the head of the diplomatic legation of the Vatican in a particular country.

governments,¹⁰² as well as Spanish dignitaries,¹⁰³ and last but not least, several prominent Hungarians.

5. Under strict confidentiality, Sztójay read aloud three secret telegrams that the English and American ambassadors in Bern sent to their governments¹⁰⁴; these telegrams were decoded by the Hungarian intelligence agency. These describe in detail what happens to Jews deported from Hungary. The telegrams mention that 1.5 million Jews have already been exterminated there, and the same fate awaits the majority of Jews who are being deported now. The following suggestions are made in these telegrams: bomb and destroy the destination of the Jewish transports, and beyond this, destroy the railroads connecting Hungary to this location. Every Hungarian and German public authority who is playing a role in this matter—along with their exact street addresses in Budapest—should be targeted by precision bombing,¹⁰⁵ and a large-scale propaganda effort should let the whole world know exactly what is happening. A further telegram names 70 prominent Hungarians and Germans who carry the primary responsibility.

Sztójay told me that he is personally unmoved by these threats because, in the event of our victory, the whole issue will become uninteresting, and in the alternative scenario, his life will definitely be over. Despite all this, it was clear that these telegrams had made a strong impression on him. I have heard in the meantime that the Council of Ministers has also been informed about these telegrams and that they had a similar effect.

[. . .] The consequences of the most recent bombings—some of which have been extremely severe and damaged residential areas as well—have been rather unpleasant, and there is widespread worry that after the removal of the Jews, Budapest will perish.¹⁰⁶ [. . .]

The weeks after the halting of the deportation were spent in a tug-of-war between Horthy's circle and the Germans allied with the Ministry of the Interior. The Nazis often flashed a promise: provided that the deportations were resumed, Hitler would not raise any obstacles to the emigration of a few thousand Jews—which the government had decided to permit due to international pressure.

102. Switzerland (represented by Vice-Consul **Carl Lutz**) and Turkey (by Envoy Şevket Fuat Keçeci) assisted the planned emigration operations by issuing visas.

103. Chargé d'affaires Ángel Sanz-Briz represented Spain in Budapest.

104. Clifford John Norton and Leland Harrison.

105. Operations of such precision were not possible, given the military technology available at the time.

106. One of the most severe bombings in Budapest occurred on July 2 during the day. This was followed by another round of bombings on the night of July 5.