
Recovering

Nonviolent

History

Civil Resistance
in Liberation Struggles

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Hungary: Nonviolent Resistance Against Austria, 1850s–1860s

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Sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts.

—Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*¹

The past may be in the eye of the beholder, but what the eye sees and, more importantly, what the beholder reports, is colored by the zeitgeist and their political orientation. This is abundantly true of the narrative of the civil resistance of the Hungarian population to the Austrian absolutist regime following the failed war for independence of 1848–1849. This episode was studied by and came to influence independence movements—notably in Ireland, Finland, and that of Mohandas Gandhi (Mahatma) in India. It featured prominently in the early literature on nonviolent action, despite taking place before the term was coined, and was usually described as “passive resistance.”²

The popular history of the campaign derives from a book by the Irish nationalist Arthur Griffith, leader of Sinn Féin in its nonviolent period.³ Griffith’s was not a scholarly study, but rather was aimed to inspire emulation by presenting the still nonviolent Irish independence movement with a successful model of resistance. Griffith also highlighted the leading role of Ferenc Deák. In the 1930s, leading proponents of nonviolent action, such as Richard Gregg, Bart de Ligt, Krishnalal Shridharani, and Aldous Huxley, drew on Griffith’s account.⁴ Huxley’s view was that “the long campaign of non-violent resistance and non-co-operation conducted by the Hungarians under Deák was crowned with complete success in 1867.” Nevertheless, he continues,

the name of [Lajos] Kossuth, the leader of the violent Hungarian revolution of 1848 was, and still is, far better known than that of Deák. Kossuth was an ambitious power-loving militarist, who completely failed to liberate his country. Deák refused political power and personal distinction . . . and without shedding blood compelled the Austrian government to restore the Hungarian constitution. Such is our partiality for ambition and militarism that we all remember Kossuth, in spite of the complete failure of his policy, while few of us have ever heard of Deák, in spite of the fact that he was completely successful.⁵

In this chapter, we seek to place the Hungarian nonviolent resistance in its general historical context as well as to point out its particular significance for the evolution of a history of nonviolent struggle, particularly for independence movements. We contrast the employment of the Hungarian example in the literature on nonviolent resistance with its comparative neglect in Hungarian historiography. We then draw on more recent Hungarian sources to discuss the popular character of the movement and its social context. Ultimately, we argue that such a formative experience of nonviolent resistance warrants a detailed reassessment, recognizing its achievements and clarifying its dynamics, including taking a more rounded view of the role of Deák himself.

Background

From 1526 Hungary was under Austrian rule despite several anti-Habsburg uprisings, violent and nonviolent, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, Hungarian reformers again asserted their cultural heritage and expressed their political aspirations, from the 1820s onward sometimes turning toward passive resistance. Then in 1848, a year of revolutionary ferment in Europe,⁶ nationalists achieved ascendancy in parliament and passed what are known as the April Laws, ratified by Emperor Ferdinand on April 11. Mainly framed by Deák, then Hungarian minister for justice, the April Laws set the agenda for internal reform and laid the foundations for national autonomy. However, in December the old guard in Vienna, seeing such concessions as weakness, forced Ferdinand to abdicate in favor of his young nephew Franz Joseph. For Hungary, the result of the renewed imperial policy of centralization was that in August 1849 Austria crushed what had turned into armed revolt, imposed absolutist rule, and abrogated the April Laws. The disloyal nation was considered as having forfeited its constitutional rights.⁷

The new military governor of Hungary, General Julius Haynau, began a reign of terror. Military courts sentenced some 500 people to death, executed 114, including the first Hungarian head of state, Lajos Batthyány, and

imprisoned 1,763. Around 50,000 former infantrymen were shanghaied into special “retribution” units and sent to fight in Italy.⁸ All judicial and administrative powers were centralized under Austrian control. The civil administration was subsumed under military power and municipal administrative rights were revoked, with posts being filled exclusively by pro-Austrian members of the middle gentry. A new internal security force was formed and a campaign of Germanization ousted Hungarian as the official language.

As a result, passive resistance became a new form of opposition to authority; in fact, “citizens had no choice but to respond for the sake of their survival.”⁹ The vast majority of the Hungarian gentry, farmers, middle classes, and intellectuals chose survival. This meant civil resistance and noncooperation. After the defeat of armed revolt, hatred and the threat of violence remained as various groups planned armed action. However, perhaps the threat of large-scale violence hampered the consolidation of the Austrian occupation and most Hungarians understood that further violence would escalate repression. Instead, they mounted a nationwide nonviolent campaign, which, after eighteen years, resulted in the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867 where Hungary became an equal partner in the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. Hungary was to have full sovereignty internally and equal weight to Austria on matters of defense and foreign policy. This agreement endured until World War I ended in 1918.

The Portrayal of the Hungarian Struggle

Deák has been presented as the architect of this campaign. A military tribunal had cleared him from involvement in the uprising because he had not advocated dethronement of the monarchy or a split from Austria. He had retired from public life when, in April 1850, Austrian minister of justice Anton von Schmerling summoned him to Vienna to discuss harmonizing Hungarian and Austrian legal procedures. Deák flatly refused, writing that, “after the regrettable events of the recent past and in the prevailing circumstances, it is not possible to cooperate actively in public affairs.”¹⁰ Somehow this was leaked to the *Ostdeutsche Post* in Vienna, from where it spawned handwritten copies across Hungary. Soon the land was plastered with Deák’s message of noncooperation and his statement came to define Hungary’s resistance.

According to Griffith, Deák’s continual declarations of loyalty to the 1848 Hungarian Constitution (which had not legally been abolished) meant his mere presence was a source of annoyance to Austria and of hope to Hungarians. Griffith presents Deák as a national voice—a figure to whom the population could turn for guidance—fanning nationalist feelings while

keeping hotter heads in check. He conducted negotiations with the emperor and, when the Hungarian parliament could sit, authored its declarations.

Imperial policy fluctuated between offering concessions (for instance, when it needed Hungarian support in war) and resumed repression (when the threat of war receded). Deák's message was constant throughout: the lawful Hungarian Constitution of 1848 was still in force and, as soon as Austria recognized this and allowed Hungarians to run their own affairs in line with the constitution, they would receive Hungarian friendship and loyalty.

Naturally, the resistance had phases—reflecting both the vicissitudes of imperial policy and its own level of organization. Deák's leading English-language biographer describes the 1850s campaign as “uncoordinated and haphazard,”¹¹ but having gained cohesion as the years passed. When Hungarians refused to sit in the Imperial Parliament in 1861, according to Griffith, Austria was humiliated—“a butt for Europe's jests.”¹² This boycott dramatized the Hungarian demand to reestablish their own parliament while denying the legitimacy of centralized Austrian rule. Griffith quotes *The Times* (London) as saying that “Passive Resistance can be so organized as to become more troublesome than armed rebellion.”¹³

Richard Gregg, the West's first major popularizer of nonviolent action, begins chapter 1 of *The Power of Nonviolence* with a section on Hungary: “an outstanding successful modern example of mass, rather than individual, nonviolent resistance.” Gregg follows Griffith in reporting Deák's rebuke to the moderate Hungarians who felt too weak to resist: “Your laws are violated, yet your mouths remain closed! Woe to the nation that raises no protest when its rights are outraged! It contributes to its own slavery by its silence. The nation that submits to injustice and oppression without protest is doomed.”¹⁴ Gregg recounts how Deák organized a campaign to boycott Austrian goods and set up independent Hungarian institutions while refusing to recognize Austrian ones in a spirit combining nonviolent resistance with legality: “This is safe ground on which, unarmed ourselves, we can hold our own against armed force. If suffering must be necessary, suffer with dignity.” Paraphrasing Griffith, Gregg summarizes the campaign:

When the Austrian tax collector came, the people did not beat him or even hoot him—they merely declined to pay. The Austrian police then seized their goods, but no Hungarian auctioneer would sell them. When an Austrian auctioneer was brought, he found that he would have to bring bidders from Austria. The government soon discovered that it was costing more to distrain the property than the tax was worth.

The Austrians attempted to billet their soldiers upon the Hungarians. The Hungarians did not actively resist the order, but the Austrian soldiers, after trying to live in houses where everyone despised them, protested strongly against it. The Austrian government declared the boycott of Austrian goods illegal, but the Hungarians defied the decree. The jails were filled to overflowing.¹⁵

Although there may have been “some violence of inner attitude [the despising of the Austrians],” the Hungarian campaign “provided a remarkable example of the power of nonviolent resistance,” eventually forcing Francis Joseph to grant Hungarians their full constitutional rights.¹⁶

Griffith describes the *dénouement*: in 1866, when Austria faced defeat by the Prussians at Königrätz, a “pale and haggard” Emperor Franz Joseph sent for Deák:

“What am I to do now, Deák?” the monarch asked of his opponent. Deák’s laconic reply is celebrated in Austrian history, “Make peace, and restore Hungary her rights.” “If I restore Hungary her Constitution now, will Hungary help me to carry on the war?” the Emperor inquired. The reply of Deák exhibits the fearless and uncompromising character of the great Magyar. It was in one word, “No.” He would not make the restoration of his country’s rights a matter of barter.¹⁷

By February 1867, the Austrians had to capitulate. Finally, nonviolent resistance and Deák had triumphed and the Habsburg emperor came to Pest to restore the Constitution of 1848 and to be crowned, pledging himself “as King of Hungary to defend it with his life.”¹⁸ Deák himself refused public office, but consented to serve in parliament as a simple member.

In contrast to the literature on nonviolent action, until recently histories of Hungary paid relatively little attention to and offered even less analysis of this episode. The struggle is reduced to political maneuvering by leading politicians and the impact on Austria of military defeat elsewhere. Histories of the Habsburg Empire stress its political and economic circumstances and important regional considerations.¹⁹

In the communist period (1948–1989), the episode was sidelined. An official history, published in English in 1975 under the auspices of the History Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, devotes much space to Lajos Kossuth, the exiled armed revolutionary, while underplaying the people’s resistance. Deák is scarcely mentioned, let alone as a leader of a movement.²⁰ Rather, in this account, Austrian repression drove the gentry into opposition, steering them on a “middle course between the extremes of submission or conspiracy” that “entrenched itself in passive resistance.” This suited them because, while rejecting “centralised absolutism,” they lacked the commitment to take the national struggle further. The wealthier bourgeoisie could pursue their interests inside a military empire, but objected to the “lack of constitutional life and political security.” They, along with the “patriotic plebeian masses of the towns who rebelled against autocracy,” formed the basis of a national resistance.²¹ By 1860–1861, it was clear to the leading strata “that passive resistance in the long run was not practical” and that “sooner or later, a situation would present itself when they would have to put aside passivity and fight or give up

resistance and come to an agreement” with the majority. They preferred the latter course.²²

There is no analysis of alternatives and passive resistance is presented as passivity rather than the active strategy described elsewhere. There is nothing about the dynamics of the resistance or how people organized. The book’s biographical sketch of Deák does not mention passive resistance or Deák’s leading opposition to Austrian repression, only his role in negotiating the *Ausgleich*. Kossuth, in contrast, is glorified as a true hero leading the armed resistance and later championing the Hungarian cause in exile.²³ The very concept of civil resistance was problematic under an internationalist communist regime that frowned on overt expressions of nationalism. Could it also be possible that a reading of history glorifying violence helped to legitimate the communists’ own coming to power whereas an account such as Griffith’s might have provided encouragement for opponents of Soviet-style communism?

Like all nations, Hungarians are proud of their achievements. A book celebrating their contributions to world civilization chronicles the feats of mathematicians and physicists, musicians, artists and filmmakers, linguists and philosophers, medical scientists, Nobel laureates, and, of course, athletes.²⁴ However, there is no mention of nonviolent resistance, which, according to the early literature on nonviolent action was perhaps one of Hungary’s greatest gifts to civilization, especially given the likely influence the mid-nineteenth century movement had on Gandhi.²⁵ Gene Sharp, the leading modern theorist of nonviolent struggle, is more cautious about the resistance’s achievements than earlier writers, yet he is clear about Deák’s prescience.²⁶ Describing how nonviolent resistance can make the opponents’ repression rebound and so undermine their power, he comments that as early as 1861 Deák already understood this mechanism.²⁷

Deák and Hungarian Nonviolent Resistance

The course of Hungarian national civil resistance and Deák’s personal journey intertwine and bifurcate. Teasing out Deák’s actual role in the movement is difficult. At one level, he embodied civil resistance—in his character and political stature, personal code of ethics, political career and lifestyle, liberal views, and social activities. Therefore, some contemporary Hungarian historians present Deák as passive resistance personified. Another school, however, far from seeing Deák as a driver of events, equates passive resistance with broader movements that commenced after the crushing of the 1848–1849 revolution and centered on spontaneous unrest.²⁸

Clearly, unlike Gandhi later, Deák did not direct campaigns. It seems unlikely that, in 1850 from his country estate, he was trying to persuade the

people to follow him. Nevertheless his personal refusal to cooperate—exemplified in his reply to Schmerling (quoted above)—“became the programmatic statement of ‘passive resistance,’ that is noncooperation with the authorities” through refusal to billet soldiers, evading taxes, feigning ignorance of the German language, and “encumbering the life of the administrators in an environment foreign to them in all possible ways.”²⁹

In 1854 Deák returned to Pest, his period of total passive resistance behind him. The move had strong political undertones. Indeed, the nationalist daily *Pesti Napló* (Pest Journal) encouraged others to follow his example,³⁰ and the secret police compiled weekly reports of his activities.³¹ Zoltán Ferenczi, Deák’s most quoted Hungarian biographer, notes that in this period he became a “leader of unmatched stature in Hungarian public opinion and thinking.”³²

Without presenting a political platform, Deák became the conscience and mentor of resistance similar to his own practices. Without preaching, his statements on the constitutional situation provided a program that was simple to understand and execute: the legal situation in Hungary was that created by the April Laws. Other systems, until amended by the lawful Hungarian government, were unlawful and consequently did not have to be obeyed. Until a lawful Hungarian government was in place, Austrian oppression should be resisted nonviolently.

Deák actively promoted national pride and, more subtly, resistance through his involvement with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, various economic and cultural organizations, and in the course of meetings in his hotel room. Deák made regular visits to the National Theatre, to the National Casino (a hub of cultural activity), to the Kisfaludy Society (the national forum of the literati), to the Society of Economists, and to the races that became a symbol of Hungarian national identity. He also supported eminent anti-Habsburg activists and, after their deaths, kept their memory alive.

Perhaps the most important single expression of resistance was his opposition to enforced official Germanization. Short of adopting a form of nationalism that would provoke the authorities, he took every opportunity to use the Hungarian language for communication in everyday life, literature, and science. His extensive correspondence illustrates this commitment. For example, in a letter to an old family friend, Deák writes, “In the midst of the great storm battering us” and “the constant attack by the powers-that-be,” the only way to save the Hungarian nation is for Hungarian to remain the language of social intercourse. He continued that there must be preservation of Hungarian culture within the circle of social life and in the course of amusements, and through the maintenance of the national costume, in every place “that is beyond the reaches of our oppressor.”³³ Later he insists that “we, here in Pest, have absolutely no desire to become German, and the

more they pressure us the more we shall resist denying our culture. It is a natural instinct in individual people and nations alike: the instinct to survive."³⁴

Addressing a women's meeting in 1858, Deák repeated this position: their nationality, Deák warned, "is being eased out of public affairs. All we can do is cultivate it and preserve it where the power of the regime does not penetrate—in the private circle of our social lives. If even there we neglect it, it will be doomed forever."³⁵

The nationalist press publicized Deák's resistance. Banned from explicit political discourse, its coverage nevertheless carried unmistakably subversive undertones and, thus, it became a forum for the nation's spiritual and political renaissance.³⁶ Most prominent was *Pesti Napló*, edited by Zsigmond Kemény, one of Deák's best friends (and resident in the same Pest hotel). Although Deák himself rarely penned articles, through such links and visiting journalists, writers, and friends, his message was relayed widely.

Deák expected the nation to hold "the line in struggle to defend its nationality, traditions, constitution and laws."³⁷ The Austrian position alternated absolutist oppression and state terrorism to at least partial appeasement. One period of concessions followed Austria's military defeat in Italy in 1857. Austria's losses were partly a result of the widespread nonpayment of taxes, resistance to recruitment, and desertion among its Hungarian subjects. And by this time, both Austrians and Hungarians were growing tired of the resistance. Therefore, Vienna attempted to moderate its absolutism: Franz Joseph's "October Diploma" in 1860 granted wide autonomy to various regions of the empire. This provoked what the minister of finance, Ignaz Edler von Plener, called a state of semirevolution; tax revenue from Hungary, he declared, could be considered lost.³⁸ In 1861, Hungarian county councils were restored and parliament convoked. This, however, did not satisfy Hungarians and the councils soon decided to stop collecting taxes not sanctioned by the Hungarian parliament and to stop paying for the support of Austrian troops. In fact "the mood of revolt became so deep that counties and communities acted as though the absolutist regime had been abolished and, without waiting for instructions from above, elected new slates of officials."³⁹ During the first postrevolutionary Hungarian parliamentary session, where Deák emerged as the preeminent national leader, a conciliatory petition, which foreshadowed the *Ausgleich* of 1867, was issued. Austria merely renewed its repression. Deák countered with a second petition. This recognized that the time for compromise was over and prepared readers for a further round of repression. The petition concluded,

The nation will endure the hardships if it has to, in order to preserve for future generations the freedom bequeathed to it by our ancestors. It will endure without despair, as our ancestors endured and suffered to protect the nation's rights, for what may be wrested away by main force may be

won back with time and good fortune, but what the nation voluntarily surrenders for fear of suffering may not be regained, or only with great difficulty. The nation will endure in hope for a better future and in trust in the justice of its cause.⁴⁰

Again Deák urged a policy of nonviolent resistance. Under threat of arms, parliament was prorogued, but Deák's popularity had never been higher and he was seen as the main leader of the resistance. Furthermore, the opposition was now more organized than in the 1850s and "had an ideology in the form of the explicit and progressive petitions Deák had drafted."⁴¹ Nevertheless, even Deák doubted how much national resistance could achieve: "Often despondent and pessimistic, he knew how weak Hungary was in comparison with the dynasty. This awareness did not raise his spirits. It was faith, not *Realpolitik*, which gave him the moral strength to persevere."⁴² As it was, his policy took almost two decades to achieve his goal and depended on other pressures on the Habsburg Empire, pressures that were largely outside Hungarian control. What leverage the Hungarians practically exerted on the Habsburgs requires further research, but the character of this resistance was, despite the popular accounts, largely outside Deák's control. Although he consciously opted for passive resistance, Deák did nothing to actively lead, organize, or ideologically underpin the resistance movement. If he promoted nonviolent tactics, he never advertised his views on these and did not transform his own resistance into a cogent theory or practice. We are left not only with a vague impression of his motivational drivers, but with an equally fuzzy sense of his strategic vision.⁴³ This explains why it was interpreted in such different ways and appropriated to serve so many varied political agendas.⁴⁴ This is not to diminish Deák's stature or devalue his personal mission: after all, the *Ausgleich*, which was his life's work, was achieved. It merely places him in the context of a larger struggle that he symbolized for many, but did not actually lead.

Questions remain about the interrelationship of Deák with the movement as a whole: How spontaneous was Hungarian popular resistance? Would it have emerged without Deák? Would it have continued for so long without his presence? And would it have been less organized without his guidance? One could say that the social environment and public mood were already primed for resistance, whether arising consciously or spontaneously, and it became a central strategy for personal and national survival after the quashed revolution and the ensuing reign of terror.

Hungarian Nonviolent Resistance: The Broader Context

In fact, the resistance campaign had a long gestation period, even preceding the emergence of Deák. There was already resistance to the regime in the

1820s. Before the 1848 revolution, civil resistance was a “weapon” of those not yet able to take up arms; after 1849, it became a form of protest for the defeated and disenfranchised.

Miklós Molnár, without referring specifically to Deák, notes that resistance “became a way of life and an ethical code.”⁴⁵ Taxes were avoided, as was military service.⁴⁶ Public celebrations, including the church services that gave thanks for the emperor’s February 1953 escape from assassination, resulted in no-shows. Public office was eschewed, courts were boycotted, and people refused to speak German. Hungarian authors and plays were preferred to Austrian ones. The performances, selected for maximum pertinence, carried coded messages and provided a platform for patriotic affirmation. They were advertised as natives-only events where Austrians would have been *persona non grata*.⁴⁷ Symbolic clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry in the national colors were worn,⁴⁸ especially on significant dates (e.g., the emperor’s birthday or name day and the birthdays of Kossuth and Batthyány, and dates that marked events of the revolution or commemorated the execution of its leaders) and at public functions, dances,⁴⁹ and theatrical performances.⁵⁰ When Mihály Vörösmarty, the father of Hungarian literature, died on November 18, 1855, the regime banned unannounced speeches at his funeral. The funeral drew a crowd of 20,000 silently protesting mourners.

A new and often invisible, no-holds-barred, secret war evolved “for the survival of the nation.” It was “fought with arms, with the spoken and printed word, via agricultural exhibitions, pilgrimage, paintings” and “in theatres, markets, churches, at the stock exchange and in the columns of newspapers and journals in Paris, London and Hamburg.”⁵¹

The platform of opposition, that became a way of life for a large section of the Hungarian population during the repressive 1850s, is described by Éva Somogyi as follows:

The rich magnates and the well-to-do nobles, the intellectuals and the citizens have decided that they will not pay their taxes until the executor knocks at their doors. Only those supplies that cannot be hidden will be handed over to the military. People will deny understanding German and will everywhere demand answers to verdicts in Hungarian. Nobody will truthfully report the status of his wealth and income. If anybody is asked a question, the answer has to be—I do not know; if information is sought about a person, the answer has to be—I do not know him; if events have to be verified, the answer has to be—I have seen nothing. The slogan is: detest absolutism and ignore its servants as if they were not living amongst us.⁵²

But, of course, it was not quite this simple. People’s movements are not monolithic, with all the protesters acting in unison and taking their cues from one source. As with most resistance movements, here the nonviolent

discipline was not complete.⁵³ Some cooperated with the regime; others plotted a new uprising. Most of these plotters were caught and eventually executed or sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment.⁵⁴

For the study of nonviolent action, careful analysis leads to ambiguities that the early popularizers of nonviolent action did not discuss. Deák's principles resonated with Griffith, Gandhi, and later theorists, but perhaps the resistance should be seen as a more pragmatic, strategically planned and executed mass movement of people who had a goal, who knew what they were fighting for and why, and who had cohesion and self-discipline based on strong morale. Perhaps those promoting nonviolent action overstate the movement's role and downplay the importance of external factors. And further, perhaps an accumulation of evidence and folklore over several decades has allowed Griffith and others to construct Deák as a leader that he may not actually have been.

Possibly the most important question concerns what can be learned from the Hungarian example. Mass movements, especially when they are not confined to a particular class but have broad-based appeal (including support from peasants and workers), have to be located in their economic and social contexts. Class differences and economic hardships set tones of discontent. When a system is changing rapidly, whether because of new laws or changes wrought by industrialization and modernization, the distinction is blurred between resistance to change itself and resistance against the government in power at that moment. Most Hungarians were clearly opposed to the oppressive Austrian regime. Following the failed war of independence, the people lost their voice: parliament, local political autonomy, free expression, and the use of the Magyar language were replaced by foreign officials, an unfamiliar and unwelcome police system, and an expensive military police state. But, as suggested, this was far from the whole story.

At the same time as the Habsburgs were being pushed into rapprochement (by the pressure of foreign defeats and rivalries elsewhere), a capitalist boom inside Hungary, suggests Péter Hanák, by the mid-1860s brought Hungarian pressure for "normalization."⁵⁵ Class conflicts, which were submerged during the revolution, also soon reasserted themselves. Dictatorships polarize society and, always in such circumstances, there are collaborators. Sections of the aristocracy supported the crown. The gentry, too, were divided: those entitled to hold public office—the intelligentsia, the landed, and the young—usually opted for reluctant cooperation with Austria. Among the incentives for holding public office were hopes of a quick promotion and the quasi-patriotic desire for regional Hungarian hegemony over ethnic minorities.⁵⁶ However, the victorious Habsburgs managed to drive the majority of the gentry and even the Habsburg-supporting conservatives into at least nonactive resistance by ignoring their concerns.⁵⁷ The

nobles withdrew from public life, eschewed public office, and “wherever they could, evaded the directives of absolutism and boycotted its representatives.” They retreated to their estates, to bide their time and await a better future, perhaps “unified and intransigent” only in their determination to regain the independence taken from them.⁵⁸

Further, the forces of industrialization were worrying the lesser nobility. As their estates dwindled and meeting their tax burdens became more difficult, they may have discovered a patriotic duty to dodge them. In the words of Paul Ignotus, “He felt he was protesting against tyranny and reaction; but in fact what hurt him most was inevitable in the process of industrializing a society.”⁵⁹ Even the peasantry, struggling to obtain land and engaged in lawsuits against former landlords, hated foreign rule. Hanák notes that most “understood that the 1848 revolution had given them their liberation and land” and that the fight for independence “was alloyed in their minds with a certain amount of peasant democracy” in the same way as the “struggles of the age of absolutism were linked with national motives.”⁶⁰ In other words, movements of nonviolent resistance can be spontaneous expressions of the will of the populace without top-down leadership. Inspirational actions by individuals need not be read as control or leadership of the movement.

Conclusion

Perhaps a little confusingly, László Kontler concludes that “Evidence on all sorts of collaboration uncovered by recent research suggests that the dimensions of “passive resistance” have been greatly exaggerated by national legend, but it still seems to have been the dominant type of political attitude in Hungary during neo-absolutism.”⁶¹

Following the crushing of the 1848–1849 uprising, nonviolent resistance broke out spontaneously among the population. There was no centralized leadership. Deák provided an example as to the form and tools that could be used to conduct the struggle. However, while the struggle would probably have been sustained even without Deák, the movement in all likelihood would have been less homogeneous and sporadic local armed clashes more common. One of the strengths of being decentralized and nonhierarchical was that there was no leadership to imprison in order to decapitate the movement.

Once the armed uprising was crushed, the only possibility of protest on a wide scale was civil disobedience. But this nonviolent strategy led to victory and meant that, for some time afterward, the nation eschewed violence and warfare. Before 1848, struggles were conducted both violently and nonviolently. In 1848 violence came to the fore but, once the uprising was

defeated, nonviolence characterized Hungarian politics. This was a paradigm shift and led to the freedom of the country.

Griffith's book tried to show what can be done if people are united; it was calculated to influence others to experiment with or even emulate these historical precedents. In short, he had pragmatic reasons for constructing a legend.⁶² In contrast, Béla Király underplays Deák's contribution: "Deák did not originate ideas or bring mass movements to life." Nevertheless, he adds that Deák "was able to recognize political, social, and economic forces and the power balance in the Habsburg lands, and above all, to sense the moment he could harness these forces and use them to realize his goal."⁶³ Whatever Deák's influence in Hungary, and whatever influence this episode of resistance had on the Irish and other struggles and as an inspiration for Gandhi's campaigns, it should be better known as an important early chapter in the evolution of nonviolent resistance. Further analysis is needed to draw lessons for nonviolent struggle that do not depend on one heroic leader. As Hanák comments, while the 1848 war for independence may have created heroes, Haynau's retribution produced martyrs and fanned anti-Austrian feelings.⁶⁴

And finally, work still needs to be done on the impact of the struggle on the Hungarian psyche. To what degree did it foster Hungarian nationalism, national collective identity, and cultural pride? Did the struggle legitimize further nonviolent action by the population? Did it influence methods of resistance to the totalitarian regime in Hungary before and after the revolution of 1956?

Not only should the nineteenth-century Hungarian resistance be better known but, as Aldous Huxley requested, it should not be overshadowed by romanticized armed uprisings. In Hungary today, Deák is a national hero and the bicentenary of his birth was widely commemorated across the country in 2003 with scores of publications, both popular and scholarly.⁶⁵ His passive resistance has been hailed as part of Hungary's national character, and he is acknowledged as *A Haza Bölcsé* (the Sage of the Nation). Nevertheless leaders who fought with arms are better known and anniversaries of armed struggles are more enthusiastically celebrated. And in this regard, it seems that history has more recently been repeated in the region: the armed Hungarian uprising in 1956 is better remembered and more highly valued than the 1968 Czechoslovak nonviolent resistance. Yet Soviet troops crushed the Hungarian revolution in a matter of days while it took them months to regain control in Czechoslovakia.

Hungarian nonviolent resistance demonstrated 150 years ago that state terrorism can be resisted when the oppressed are sufficiently united and have a course of action that is easily understandable and simple to follow. Deeper analysis shows that the Hungarian nonviolent resistance of the 1850s and 1860s was not quite as straightforward as its foreign popularizers

claimed. Nevertheless, such campaigns can achieve their goals when outside events and deeper internal economic and social drivers come together to unite the oppressed and weaken the position of the oppressor. As the Hungarian example and recent major studies of nonviolent struggle have shown, this can be achieved when the oppressed withdraw their consent to be ruled and undermine state power by targeting areas of particular vulnerability in their oppressor.⁶⁶ Ralph Summy points out that, where the oppressor needs the cooperation of the oppressed, a dependency relationship comes into existence—one that the oppressed can exploit.⁶⁷ The Prussian defeat of Austria hastened the *Ausgleich*, but that was merely a final chapter in a lengthy process in which noncooperation had laid the foundations for that compromise.

Notes

This chapter draws from Tamás Csapody and Thomas Weber, “Hungarian Nonviolent Resistance Against Austria and Its Place in the History of Nonviolence,” *Peace and Change* 32, no. 4 (2007): 499–519; and Tamás Csapody, “Secondary Forms of Passive Resistance in Hungary Between 1848 and 1865,” *Central European Political Science Review* 5, no. 15 (2004): 178–189. All translations of quotes and titles from Hungarian sources are by the authors.

1. Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (New York: Avon, 1982), 253.

2. *Passive resistance* remains the term used in Hungarian and in histories of the movement. However, it would be wrong to read into the campaign the negative connotations that led Gandhi to reject this term and introduce *satyagraha* (firmly grasping truth, often translated as soul-force or truth-force).

3. Arthur Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary*, 3rd ed. (Dublin: Whelan and Son, 1918). First published in 1904, the 1918 edition informed the later literature on nonviolent action.

4. Richard Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1934), 3; Bart de Ligt, *The Conquest of Violence: An Essay on War and Revolution* (London: George Routledge, 1937), 138–139; Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938); Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence: The Sociology of Gandhi's Satyagraha* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 113. Clarence Marsh Case in his *Non-Violent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure* (New York: Century, 1923), 328, also refers to the episode, but acknowledges the importance of other factors as did a later generation of researchers on nonviolent action such as William Robert Miller, *Nonviolence: A Christian Interpretation* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 242; Mulford Q. Sibley, *The Quiet Battle: Writings on the Theory and Practice of Non-Violent Resistance* (Boston: Boston Press, 1963), 131–150 (this anthology includes an excerpt from Arthur Griffith); and Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part 3* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), 594–595.

5. Huxley, *Ends and Means*, 147.

6. Rapid economic and social transformation, as a result of the disruptions of early industrialization and the rise of nationalism and liberal political philosophies, led to violent revolutions in much of Europe (particularly in France, Prussia, and the Italian states) as well as in the Austrian Empire (particularly in Hungary).

7. On the Hungarian revolution, see Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848–1849* (London: Phoenix Press, 1979). It should also be noted that the April Laws, which gave the Hungarians rights vis-à-vis the Austrians, led minorities in Hungary to demand similar rights for themselves. Needless to say, Hungarians were as unsympathetic to these claims as Austrians were to Hungarian demands. This gave Austria the opportunity to pursue a policy of divide and rule.

8. Péter Gunst and Géza Závodszy, eds., *Magyar történelmi kronológia* [Chronology of Hungarian History] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1987), 325.

9. István Nemeskürty, *Parázs a hamú alatt* [Embers Under the Ashes] (Budapest: Megvető Könyvkiadó, 1981), 19.

10. Béla K. Király, *Ferenc Deák* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), 139.

11. Király, *Ferenc Deák*, 165.

12. Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary*, 33.

13. *Ibid.*, 34.

14. Gregg, *Power of Nonviolence*, 1–3.

15. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

16. *Ibid.*, 3.

17. Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary*, 50.

18. *Ibid.*, 63.

19. See, for example, Miklós Molnár, *A Concise History of Hungary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 206–207; and A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

20. Péter Hanák, “The Period of Neo-Absolutism 1849–1867,” in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Ervin Pamlényi (London: Collet’s, 1975), 285–320.

21. *Ibid.*, 297–298.

22. *Ibid.*, 312.

23. Ervin Pamlényi, ed., *A History of Hungary* (London: Collet’s, 1975), 611, 619.

24. Francis S. Wagner, *Hungarian Contributions to World Civilization* (Center Square, PA: Alpha, 1977).

25. See Csapody and Weber, “Hungarian Nonviolent Resistance”; and Thomas Weber, “Claiming Credit for Gandhi,” *Gandhi Marg* 27, no. 2 (2005): 165–178.

26. Conflicts, writes Sharp, “may be so complex that it is difficult to disentangle the relative roles of nonviolent action and other factors in producing the change, as for example the conclusion of the Hungarian struggle against the Austrian rule.” Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 766–767.

27. *Ibid.*, 594–595.

28. Even within this school, there is disagreement about the dates of resistance. Some suggest that passive resistance started in 1849 or 1850 and ended in 1857 or 1860 while others claim that it lasted until 1861 or even 1867. Further, some accounts note that various forms of passive resistance—such as tax refusal—could be observed during the so-called reform era of 1825–1848 or even earlier in the 1820s. See, for example, Kálmán Törs, ed., *Deák Ferenc emlékezete* [The Memory of Ferenc Deák] (Budapest: Deutsch M-féle Művészeti Intézet Kiadó, 1876), 23–25; Ágnes Deák, “Társadalmi ellenállási stratégiák Magyarországon azabszolutista kormányzat ellen 1851–1852-ben” [Social Resistance Strategies in Hungary Against the Absolutist Government in 1851–1852] *AETAS* 4, vol. 10 (1995): 34.

29. László Kontler, *A History of Hungary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 271.

30. *Pesti Napló*, November 14, 1854, number 261–1404; *Pesti Napló*, November 21, 1854, number 267–1410.

31. Sándor Takáts, *Emlékezzünk eleinkről* [Remember Our Ancestors] (Budapest: Genis Kiadó, 1929), 523–554.

32. Zoltán Ferenczi, *Deák élete* [Deák's Life], vol. 2 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1904), 233.

33. Deák to Mrs. Géza Báthory, January 10, 1857, quoted in Ágnes Deák, ed., *Deák Ferenc: Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek* [Ferenc Deák: Selected Political Writings and Speeches], vol. 2 (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), 17–18. Deák is reported to have likened the Hungarian nation to an egg: “the longer you boil it, the harder it gets.” See Stephen Sisa, *The Spirit of Hungary: A Panorama of Hungarian History and Culture* (Toronto: Rákóczi Foundation, 1983), 172.

34. Deák to Mrs. Géza Báthory, February 15, 1857, quoted in Deák, *Deák Ferenc*, 18.

35. Quoted in Király, *Ferenc Deák*, 143.

36. The *Uj Magyar Múzeum* (New Hungarian Museum), a periodical published by Ferenc Toldi between 1850 and 1862, carried the Latin motto “Peragit tranquilla protestas, quae violentia nequit” (Gentle force will conquer where violence cannot).

37. Király, *Ferenc Deák*, 143.

38. Béla K. Király, “Ferenc Deák,” in *Hungarian Statesmen of Destiny 1860–1960*, ed. Pál B. dy (Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1989), 25–26.

39. Király, *Ferenc Deák*, 26.

40. *Ibid.*, 164.

41. *Ibid.*, 165.

42. *Ibid.*, 140.

43. See Péter Dávidházi, *Per passivam resistentiam: Változatok hatalom és írás témájára* [Variations on the Theme of Power and Writing] (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 1998), 29–51.

44. József Pap, *Magyarország vármegyei tisztikara a reformkor végétől a kiegyezésig* [The Civil Servants of Hungary's Counties Between the End of the Age of Reform and the Compromise] (Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale, 2003), 11–38.

45. Molnár, *A Concise History*, 202.

46. The novelist Mór Jókai begins his 1862 novel *Az új földesúr* (The New Landlord) with a character who vows to give up smoking when the government introduces a tobacco monopoly, to give up drinking when a tax is imposed on wine, and to quit playing cards when stamp duty is imposed on card packs.

47. Deák, “Társadalmi ellenállási stratégiák,” 39–42.

48. *Ibid.*, 34.

49. The dance of choice was the banned *csárdás*, which in its faster movements exemplifies a “seismic frenzy of Magyar merriment.” Csapody, “Secondary Forms of Passive Resistance,” 185.

50. Deák, “Társadalmi ellenállási stratégiák,” 33, 44.

51. *Ibid.*, 20. The execution of Hungarian leaders and harsh repression led to international outrage, which, along with the belief that the spirit of revolution had been extinguished in Hungary, helped soften repression in mid-1850s when Haynau was replaced.

52. Quoted in Éva Somogyi, “The Age of Neoabsolutism, 1849–1867,” in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank (London: I. B. Tauris, 1990), 235–251, at 241.

53. Lajos Lukács, *Magyar függetlenségi és alkotmányos mozgalmak 1849–67* [Hungary's Independence and Constitutional Movements 1849–67] (Budapest: Múvelt Nép, 1955).

54. Csapody, “Secondary Forms of Passive Resistance,” 187–188, names a range of Hungarian patriots executed or imprisoned for planning armed insurrections, or

plotting to assassinate or kidnap the emperor, including some authorized by Kosuth. In addition, armed bands, known as *betyárs*, supported the freedom fighters during the revolution and remained resolutely anti-Habsburg afterward. Their numbers were replenished by a steady supply of deserters and surviving Hungarian infantrymen on the run. Along with their most infamous representative, Sándor Rózsa, they became a symbol of resistance to the regime. See Nemeskürty, *Parázs a hamú alatt*, 82.

55. This Hungarian pressure stemmed from a desire for stability on the part of those who were benefiting from the boom, coupled with the desire to share in its proceeds by those who had not yet benefited as well as the "recurrent peasant movements and . . . the persistent claims of the nationalists, which threatened the noble-national hegemony." Hanák, "The Period of Neo-Absolutism," 312. György Szabad goes so far as to claim that, to some degree at least, the resistance movement may have had the reactionary outcome of alienating sections of the community from the rapidly changing world around them and "contributing to their falling behind" not only a rapidly developing Europe, but even a modernizing Vienna or Pest. György Szabad, *Hungarian Political Trends Between the Revolution and the Compromise (1848–1867)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 47.

56. Deák, "*Nemzeti egyenjogúsítás*": *Kormányzati nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon 1849–1860* ["National Equal Rights": The Government's Handling of Minorities in Hungary 1849–1860] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2000), 166, 169–170; Pap, *Magyarország vármegyei tisztikara*, 32.

57. Szabad, *Hungarian Political Trends*, 39–42. Paradoxically, at times people viewed by Hungarians as collaborators were seen as passive resisters by the Austrians. Hungarian public administrators were removed from office because, as Pest police chief Joseph Protmann reported, they "took every possible opportunity to backpedal and operate by the old conservative principles of passive resistance" and "slyly, by any means possible, discredit new institutions and block implementation of policies. Failing the opportunity for direct action, they employ passive resistance." According to the head of the Kassa (now Kosice) police, Hungarian civil servants fell into three categories: those who opposed all reforms; those generally opposed but "open to persuasion"; and those who appeared to cooperate but, in fact, simply paid lip service. However, their noncooperating compatriots denounced them as collaborators, "moral lepers," and "honorary traitors." Deák, "*Nemzeti egyenjogúsítás*," 166, 171–172.

58. Hanák, "The Period of Neo-Absolutism," 297, 308.

59. Paul Ignotus, *Hungary* (London: Ernest Benn, 1972), 65.

60. Hanák, "The Period of Neo-Absolutism," 299.

61. Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 271.

62. Steven Huxley notes that Finnish "passive resistance" entered popular mythology in a way not necessarily supported by all the evidence. For how a romanticized view of a movement can affect later theoretical positions, see Steven Duncan Huxley, *Constitutionalist Insurgency in Finland: Finnish "Passive Resistance" Against Russification as a Case of Nonmilitary Struggle in the European Resistance Tradition* (Helsinki: SHS, 1990), especially the first two chapters.

63. Király, *Ferenc Deák*, 35.

64. Hanák, "The Period of Neo-Absolutism," 289.

65. Gábor Pajkossy, "Deák-émlékév" [Deák Anniversary Year], *BUKSZ* (summer 2004): 144–157.

66. See, for example, Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005);

Robert J. Burrowes, *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); and Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, eds., *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-Violent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

67. Ralph Summy, "Nonviolence and the Case of the Extremely Ruthless Opponent," *Pacifica Review* 6, no. 1 (1994): 1–29. The problem for the Austrians was trying to rule another nation without the consent of the population, especially when Vienna needed Hungarian taxes and soldiers. Withdrawal of consent to be ruled in such circumstances appears to be the cornerstone of successful nonviolent resistance.

Appendix:

Conflict Summaries

This appendix has been compiled by the book's editor, Maciej Bartkowski, based on the information presented in the corresponding chapters of the book. Cases are arranged alphabetically. (Any omissions in the tables are either of the editor's own making or the information was not available.)

Key

Method and Type of Nonviolent Action

Nonviolent intervention

Disruptive

Creative

Noncooperation

Political

Economic

Social

Protest and persuasion

Length of the Campaign

Short: 1 day up to 4 weeks

Medium: 1 month up to 1 year

Long: More than 1 year

Level of Participation of People

Low: 1–100 people or less than 20 percent of the population

Medium: 100–1,000 people or between 20 percent and 50 percent of the population

High: More than 1,000 people or more than 50 percent of the population

Hungary

Action	Method/ <i>Type</i>	Date	Length	Level of Participation	Direct Impact	Long-Term/Overall Impact of Civil Resistance
Hungarians refused to sit in the Imperial Parliament	Noncooperation/ <i>Political</i>	1861	Medium	Low	Dramatized Hungarians’ demand to reestablish their own parliament and denied the legitimacy of centralized Austrian rule	Hungarian nonviolent resistance served as an inspiration for the Irish nationalist leader Arthur Griffith and for Mohandas Gandhi Hungarians’ noncooperation laid down foundations for winning political concessions from Austrians in the form of compromise that established dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1867
Wearing symbolic clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry in the national colors, especially on significant dates for Hungarians	Protest and persuasion	1850s–1860s	Long	High	Demonstrated both opposition and a national pride	
Setting up Hungarian institutions	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1850s–1860s	Long	High		
Ferenc Deák writes petitions to Austrians	Protest and persuasion	Early 1860s	Short	Low	Helped continue nonviolent resistance	
Refusal of military service	Noncooperation/ <i>Social, Political</i>	1850s–1860s	Long			
Resistance to Germanization, including refusal to speak German socially, preference for Hungarian authors and plays over Austrian ones, public performances with coded nationalist messages	Protest and persuasion	1850s–1860s	Long	High	A platform for patriotic and national affirmation	
Boycott of government celebrations, including church services	Noncooperation/ <i>Political</i>	1850s–1860s		High	Resulted in no shows	
Refusal to provide board and lodging for Austrian soldiers	Noncooperation/ <i>Social, Political</i>	1850s–1860s	Long	High	After trying to live in houses where everyone despised them, Austrian soldiers protested strongly to their superiors against staying with the Hungarian hosts	
Boycott of courts	Noncooperation/ <i>Social, Political</i>	1850s–1860s	Long	High		
Withholding tax payments to the Austrian government and boycotting government auctions of seized goods	Noncooperation/ <i>Economic</i>	1850s–1860s	Long	High	The government discovered it was costing more to distrain the property than the tax was worth	
Campaign to boycott Austrian goods	Noncooperation/ <i>Economic</i>	1850s–1860s	Long	High		
Funeral ceremony of Mihály Vörösmarty attended by 20,000 people. It was a silent protest since the regime banned unannounced speeches during this ceremony	Protest and persuasion	1855		High	Show of unity, nonviolent resistance, and national inspiration	Hungarian nonviolent resistance served as an inspiration for the Irish nationalist leader Arthur Griffith and for Mohandas Gandhi