

Edmund Veesenmayer on Horthy and Hungary: An American Intelligence Report

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"As Minister to Hungary, Veesenmayer had something more than the normal duties of a Minister."
(*The Veesenmayer Interrogation Report*, p. 21)

"... it was a good thing if [Veesenmayer] did not always know everything that was going on (*i.e.* the Gestapo was doing) [in Hungary]."
(*SS leader Heinrich Himmler*, cited *ibid.*, p. 22)

The role Edmund Veesenmayer played in twentieth century Hungarian history is almost without parallel. He was, to all intents and purposes, a *Gauleiter*, a kind of a modern *satrap*, in the country for the last year of the war. Hungary would have her share of quislings during the post-war communist era, but they would not be complete foreigners: the Mátyás Rákosis, the Ernő Gecős, the Ferenc Münnichs, the János Kádárs, and the Farkases (Mihály and Vladimir) had connections to Hungary, however tenuous in some cases.¹ Veesenmayer had no familial, ethnic or cultural ties to Hungary, he was simply an agent of a foreign power appointed to make sure that power's interests and wishes prevailed in the country. The closest parallel one finds to him in the post-war period is Marshal Klementy E. Voroshilov, the member of the Soviet leadership who was appointed as head of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary at the end of the war. Though Voroshilov's position most resembled Veesenmayer's, it is doubtful whether the Soviet General was as often involved in meddling in Hungarian affairs as was the energetic German commissioner and his SS cohorts. Not in vain did pundits in Hungary refer to Veesenmayer as "*Reichsverwesemayer*" which is a play on words on his name and the German term for Regent: "*Reichsverweser*."²

Edmund Veesenmayer was born in 1904 in Bad Kissingen, Bavaria. He attended the University of Munich and received a doctorate in economics in 1928. Subsequently, he taught economics at another institution of higher learning in the same city. In 1932 Veesenmayer joined the Nazi Party and soon thereafter became an assistant of Wilhelm Keppler, one of Hitler's economic advisers and the founder of an organization of industrialists and businessmen

who provided support for SS boss Heinrich Himmler. When Keppler was appointed Hitler's special agent in Austria in 1937, Veesenmayer accompanied him. Not long thereafter he became an economic expert in Vienna advising the German Foreign Office. From the summer of 1938 to early 1939 Veesenmayer was back in Berlin working with Keppler on Germany's Four-Year Plan. Thereafter he became the Third *Reich's* principal troubleshooter in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. March of 1939 found him in Bratislava, assisting the preparations for the declaration of Slovak independence under German aegis. In August of the same year, just before the Nazi invasion of Poland, he would be in Danzig. In April of 1941, just before the German invasion of Yugoslavia, he would be in Zagreb. Other missions would follow, including trips to occupied Belgrade, a trip to Rome, and another visit to Zagreb (in 1942). In 1943 he returned to Berlin and was given the task of coordinating Axis (more precisely, German-Italian and Japanese) propaganda activities. Soon, however, more urgent tasks were found for him, these included resumed visits abroad, this time to Budapest, to study the attitudes to the war and the prosecution of the war effort by the Hungarian leadership and society. It is with this stage of his remarkable career that our document picks up the story. But before we begin to read about his activities in Budapest, it might be useful to examine Veesenmayer's political and, especially, economic ideas. In this connection it might be most useful to offer a précis of the first part of the document the second part of which we reproduce below in full detail.

Veesenmayer had joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) because he believed that the party's economic program promised progress and prosperity for Germany. He also hoped that such progress would save the country from communism. His own theories of economics were shaped by Adolf Weber of the University of Munich and Wilhelm Keppler with whom he would cooperate almost to the very end of the Nazi era. While Veesenmayer was enthusiastic about the NSDAP's economic platform, he had some doubts about the totalitarian system introduced in Germany as well as that country's involvement in global conflict. These doubts, however, were not strong enough for him to abandon the Nazi cause. He was also disappointed in the lackadaisical attitude the Nazi leaders, especially Hitler, had toward the science of economics. In the fall of 1945 he explained one of the weaknesses of the Nazi system by saying that the German genius for "organization" "organized not only what it should[,] but everything that it could."³ Veesenmayer had probably come to this conclusion late during the war, or after its conclusion. In his interrogation he admitted having been a stalwart Nazi in his younger years (he had reached the honorary rank of *Brigadeführer* in the SS) but, after the war, he proclaimed complete disillusionment in Nazi ideas and the Nazi system. He suggested to his American captors that a major program of reeducation should be undertaken in post-war Germany and, as a part of this, intelligent, young Germans should be sent to the United States to be trained for the task of German reconstruction.⁴

The interrogations of Veesenmayer had taken place over several days during the third week of September, 1945. They took place in the headquarters of the American Military Intelligence Center in Oberursel. His chief interrogator was Harry N. Howard. The process was transacted in English and the report on the interrogations was produced from extensive notes taken, as well as from corroborative evidence, such as the interrogation reports of other German and Hungarian officials, including those of Regent Horthy (12 Sept. 1945) and Prime Minister László Bárdossy (9 Sept. 1945). The report was signed by DeWitt C. Poole, the head of the State Department Special Interrogation Mission.⁵

Like all other documents of this type, the Veesenmayer interrogation report by itself is useful mainly for persons with an extensive knowledge of the events and personalities concerned. As Veesenmayer was evidently not in possession of his notes and other relevant documents at the time of his interrogation, he had to rely on his memory, which might not have served him evenly and effectively. He might have also forgotten some developments or refrained from mentioning them for a number of reasons. No doubt, he also tried to show his own role in Hungary in as favourable light as he thought was possible under the circumstances — his comments on the "Jewish problem" are especially ill-informed or disingenuous. Furthermore, it is also possible that the transcript of the interrogation, or more precisely, the report based on it, having been written by American intelligence officers who probably did not have a thorough knowledge of the subject, was not a completely accurate reflection on what Veesenmayer had said in the interviews of September, 1945. Because of all these factors, it should be emphasized that those readers who are not intimately familiar with the subject, should read this report in conjunction with reliable works on this topic, and in particular, along with Dr. Pritz's paper in this volume.⁶

Despite these limitations of the Veesenmayer report of 1945, it offers much that is interesting to students of Hungarian wartime history, and is also useful to historians of the period who seek not so much new knowledge, but information that could confirm one or another of the historical interpretations of this period. In particular, the document not only reveals much about Veesenmayer's views about Horthy and his country (views which are not always perceptive), but gives glimpses of other matters as well, including — interestingly enough — other Hungarian leaders' assessments of Horthy, as told to, and later reported by, Veesenmayer. The report also contains information on Hungary's other leading personalities, on the country's politics, and, above all, on the nature of German rule in the country. In this latter connection the interrogation report time and again reveals that there were serious differences of view as well as of approaches among the Nazi leaders concerned with the running of Hungary's affairs. There was also duplication in responsibilities as well as overlaps in the authority of the people involved. All this led to friction among the people and agencies concerned. Despite the vast powers that had been delegated to him by Hitler through the German Foreign Office (FO), Veesen-

mayer had no say in certain important matters since these were the responsibility of Nazi German agencies other than the FO. In these matters, Veesebmayer shared power with other Nazi officials assigned to Hungary. These included General Hans Greiffenberg who was in charge of military matters, and SS-Obergruppenführer Otto Winkelmann who oversaw German security interests in Hungary and whose Gestapo units and "Jewish evacuation" experts apparently operated without the approval — or even the knowledge — of either of Veesebmayer's office (so he claimed in 1945), or of the Hungarian authorities.

The document partially reproduced below can be found in the Records of the Office of Strategic Services (Record Group 266), the 1944-45 series, Box 312. Its document no. is XL 22552. It was declassified in 1973. It is deposited in the National Archives of the United States. I am indebted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Arts Research Program of the Department of National Defence of Canada for having made it possible for me to do research at the NAUS and other American and Canadian archives over the years. As is our custom, the document below is reproduced very much as it had been written, which means *inter alia* that diacritical marks on Hungarian names are not given. A few editorial comments or corrections are offered in square brackets. Misspelled names — and there are a lot of them, e.g. the name of Döme Sztójay is misspelled [Sztójai] throughout — are corrected only the first time they occur. Misspelled names that might be unrecognizable to the reader, or are comical — General Rátz is written as "Rats"— however, are corrected each time. Those parts of the document that contained very irrelevant information or were confusing, were omitted.

NOTES

¹Most of Hungary's communist leaders hailed from the country's religious or ethnic minorities — Kádár's mother was Slovak, many of the other top communists were of Jewish origin. Moreover, some of them had strong Soviet links — including, in some cases, Russian spouses, Soviet citizenship, and official membership in Soviet Russian military and/or intelligence organizations. They at least, spoke Hungarian.

²Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1994), p. 337. The letter "v" in Hungarian is pronounced very much like the "w" in German.

³The report of the interrogation of Veesebmayer, 5 Oct. 1945, p. 3.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 3f.

⁵DeWitt C. Poole was a highly qualified American academic who had had a great deal of interest in the lands of the former Habsburg Empire and who had headed the Foreign Nationalities Branch of the Office of Strategic Services from 1942 to 1945..

⁶Under "reliable works" on the subject we have in mind Professor Sakmyster's biography of Horthy mentioned above, and such treatments as C.A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945* (Edinburgh, 1957, 2nd edn, 1961, 2 vols.), and Péter Gosztonyi, *A magyar honvédség a második világháborúban* [The Hungarian Army in the Second World War] (Roma, 1986).

Appendix

Part II of the Interrogation Report on Veesenmayer: Hungary

Mission to Budapest, March 1943

From now on Veesenmayer's activities and attention were almost entirely centred on the Hungarian problem. At the beginning of March 1943 he was sent on a mission to Budapest for about three weeks. The purpose was to view the whole situation, especially in Budapest, in the interest of the prosecution of the war effort. He was also to find out the ideas of the different Hungarian parties, both within the Government and the Opposition.

The "Party of Hungarian Life" — the Government Party — included various elements and tendencies which were not always unified in a program, he found. There was a young people's organization, similar in nature to the Hitlerjugend, but its only program was one of national aggrandizement. It had no special and economic program worth serious consideration.

Veeseamayer met [party leader] Bela Imredy [Béla Imrédy] a number of times during this period. Imredy, Premier in 1939, had made a number of proposals for land reform, and was not in good favor with Horthy. Veeseamayer had not yet met Horthy, but considered him merely a "function" of the landlords, as the Government was dominated by this element. The Church was included among the big landlords, and Cardinal Seredi [Justinián Serédi] was one the greatest land-holders of the country. Veeseamayer thought Hungary a hundred years behind the times. All political power was concentrated in Budapest, the rest of the country not counting for anything in a political sense. The landlords dominated the situation — they spent the summer and autumn on their estates, and then lived in Budapest in the winter, spending their money and using their influence against reform. Horthy would stand for no land reform, and it was impossible to change the situation. Later on, Veeseamayer remarked, Horthy would never allow him even to mention land reform!

Veeseamayer did not recall the details of his conversations with Imredy while engaged in this "intelligence" work, beyond remarking that they spoke of how the war was going for the Axis. Some groups in the Government party were showing independence; this did not make for good relations with the German Government. Veeseamayer felt that the atmosphere was not trending

[sic, i.e. unfolding] favorably, and that there must be a "sharper" control of the situation in Hungary, so that there would be no "surprises" in the future.

As long as the war developed favorably, things went well in Hungary and the country was "safe" for the Axis. But with the news from Stalingrad and North Africa, this was no longer true. At the same time economic developments were disappointing. Hungary had been important for Germany in the matter of agriculture, oil and bauxite. While production had only been about 100,000 tons in the first years of the war, by 1944 Hungary was producing about 800,000 tons of oil per year. The bauxite development was also new, and Germany had supplied about one third of the invested capital. Nevertheless, it was felt that Hungary could do more in the war effort, and German-Hungarian commercial relations could be improved, if proper "clearing" facilities were provided. It was for these reasons, primarily, that Veesenmayer had been sent to the country.

Veesebmayer said that the Szent Gyorgy incident had nothing to do with his visit, since he had heard of this only a year later. He did say that the German Government and he, personally, despite Horthy's repeated denials, had the feeling that Professor Szent Gyorgy [Albert Szent-Györgyi, biochemist, Nobel laureate (1937)], in his journey to Turkey during March 1943, had some official connection, although he may not have been an "official" agent. Veesebmayer then compared the Szent Gyorgy visit to Turkey with his own to Hungary at this time.

During this visit to Hungary, Veesebmayer said he had had no contact at all with Major Szalasi [Ferenc Szálasi], the leader of the Arrow Cross Party. This was on instructions from the Foreign Office, which did not want to muddy the waters in its contacts with the Hungarian Government. This same was also true in November 1943.

He did see Col. Gen. Ruskay [Jenő Ruskay], retired, however, who was somewhat of a politician, and a strong nationalist. Ruskay had contacts with the Archduke Albrecht, although Veesebmayer did not see the latter because Hitler did not like him. Albrecht hated Horthy, and the sentiment was reciprocated. He saw Raynics [Ferenc Rajnics], the well-known Hungarian journalist, M.P., and member of the opposition, who was of the Imredy party, although he pursued an independent course, too. Another person whom he met was Messer[?], who later on was Szalasi's Minister in Berlin. Messer was President of the German-Hungarian Chamber of Commerce. Veesebmayer had no contact with the Small Farmer's Party of Tibor Eckhardt, since he thought it of no consequence. Neither did he get into touch with the Social Democrats, since they were not powerful and were more interested in internal affairs than in foreign politics. Veesebmayer did talk with General Rats [Jenő Rátz], who was later the second man in the Sztojai Government [the government of Döme Sztójay]. Formerly on the General Staff, Horthy had fired him because he had criticized Hungary's limited participation in the war. [Rátz] was a fanatical nationalist, who, like all Hungarian leaders, hated the Rumanians. Veesebmayer also talked with industrialists and financiers.

On his return to Berlin, Veesenmayer made a report to the Foreign Office, which went to Ribbentrop. He said that there was no doubt that Kállay [Prime Minister Miklós Kállay] was disloyal to Germany, and was not wholeheartedly supporting the war; on the contrary, he would try to get out of the war at the first opportunity. He also described the position of the various opposition groups. Veesenmayer thought that there were latent dangers in the political situation in Hungary if the war went unfavorably, especially in economic questions, and particularly in connection with raw materials, food and oil. He reported on the importance of Horthy and his entourage, expressing his conviction that any change could only come with the cooperation of Horthy, since Horthy was a vital part of the landlord-dominated government. The change must come through German influence with Horthy, not against him.

Veesebmayer was also convinced that improved relations must be generated between Hungary and its neighbours — Slovakia, Rumania, Croatia, and Serbia — if the war were to be fought to a successful conclusion in South-eastern Europe. Hungary had never had good relations with its neighbours, because Hungarian nationalists always wanted everything, and this situation could not be allowed to continue. In particular he cited the Hungarian demands as to Siebenbuergen, the Banat [Bánát] and Prekomurje. The Germans continued to occupy the Banat, and had decided to give it to Hungary only after the war so that they could continue to get the goods out free of difficulty with Hungarian "clearing".

Veesebmayer's report was sent to Ribbentrop, who was interested, and told Hitler of it, but nothing was heard after that. Meanwhile the situation became worse in Hungary.

Mission to Budapest, November 1943

At the beginning of November 1943, Veesebmayer was sent on a similar mission to Hungary and remained there for three or four weeks. The situation was now getting worse. Italy had surrendered. Andor Henke, of the Foreign Office, thought that Veesebmayer should return for further study of conditions in Hungary.

On this trip Veesebmayer saw Count Bethlen [former Prime Minister István Bethlen], whom he found "correct", but anti-German as well as anti-Soviet. Bethlen wanted to get out of the war. Veesebmayer also saw Imredy and talked over the situation with him. Another was Jurcek [Béla Jurcek], under-secretary in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, who was very important for German-Hungarian economic relations.

Imredy felt that the situation was very grave, and thought the Government must be changed to include members of the opposition, but he was not very active at this time. Veesebmayer was much impressed with Imredy's intelligence, character, and integrity, and felt that he would be an excellent man

to lead Hungary. He neither drank nor smoked, although Veesenmayer thought that perhaps Imredy, like Hitler, might have benefited by such vices!

Veesebmayer also had a long talk with Laszlo de Bardossy [László Bárdossy], former Minister to Great Britain, and former Premier of Hungary (1941-1942). Ribbentrop had asked Veesebmayer to see Bardossy, since he had a very favourable impression of the latter in London. Bardossy impressed Veesebmayer. With Messer, he considered him as one of the most intelligent man he had seen in Hungary. He had an excellent "dialectic", looked well, had temperament, a winning personality, and was altogether agreeable. He saw problems from a higher point of view than that of mere personal advantage.

Bardossy was, however, really a sick man and not active politically. He was especially opposed to Horthy, whom he held responsible for the failure to make social reforms in Hungary. He also felt that if all the forces of the country were really concentrated, Hungary could make a far greater contribution to the war effort of the Axis. Bardossy told him that Horthy was the real heart and centre of the secret Hungarian opposition to the war. He expressed himself with some reserve, but one could read between the lines without difficulty. Bardossy was against the Russians, since he felt that the Russians had no real culture and he was a man of great culture. Veesebmayer asked Bardossy who might be a good man to lead a Hungarian government in the desired direction, and was told that Imredy was the best man, since he was a friend of Germany, a man of integrity, who had been a soldier in two wars. Moreover, he was a good economist.

Veesebmayer made a report similar to the one he had made following his March visit to Budapest. He indicated that there was now great danger, that Kallay was going his own way. All in all he thought that in one more year, Hungary would be out of the war. He saw that the greater part of the government party was moving toward the right [i.e. right-wing] opposition groups. The reason for this was that it was now becoming clear that a country could not fight the Soviet Union and still remain friendly with Great Britain and the United States. It had to be all or nothing. This was especially true after the Moscow Conference. There was no chance now of help from the Anglo-Americans. Even the landlords, many of whom did not "like" the war, were now willing to throw in their weight against the Soviet Union, well knowing that if the Russians were victorious, it meant the loss of their estates and position in Hungary. But all this was very complex, and Veesebmayer thought that it was often difficult to tell which was "left" and which "right" in Hungarian politics. He felt that the politicians in Budapest spent most of their time with the "do-nothings" in the cafe night life — which was, however, a pleasant pastime.

Veesebmayer also felt that Major Szalasi, whom he had not seen, was sincere about land reform, although Horthy hated him for precisely this reason. The radicalism of Szalasi and the Arrow Cross Party was a necessity for Hungary. General Goemboes [former Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös] had seen the political future of Szalasi years ago, when the latter had reported that in

order to make a strong, popular army, the Government would have to carry through necessary political and economic reforms. In Veesenmayer's mind Szalasi was a man of character and integrity, and denied that he had ever taken a single pengo [*pengő*, the basic unit of Hungarian currency at the time] from Germany.

Veesebmayer was back in Berlin in December. He was called promptly to Ribbentrop's headquarters to discuss the situation in Hungary, but Ribbentrop upbraided him for criticizing the Fuehrer's policy in Hungary! Ribbentrop did not like Veesebmayer's report at all, and sent it back to Berlin. Veesebmayer remarked in this connection that in order to understand Germany and German policy one had to know the personalities of Ribbentrop and Hitler, neither of whom would accept an objective analysis of a situation. They did not want the truth and people were afraid to tell them anything which they did not want to hear. It was the kind of thing which rendered intelligent work in the Foreign Office well-high impossible.

The Fuehrer's Headquarter, February 8 - March 19, 1944

Veesebmayer remained in Berlin for some time, but in the early part of February he was called back to the Fuehrer's headquarters in East Prussia, near Rastenburg. Horthy had written the Fuehrer a letter saying that he wanted the Hungarian divisions on the German-Russian front withdrawn. Hitler, thereupon, sent for Veesebmayer, who remained at headquarters, largely doing nothing, for about six weeks. The last three weeks, however, were spent at Salzburg.

When Hitler asked Veesebmayer about Hungary, Veesebmayer suggested that it would be wise to have Horthy come for conference with Hitler. Hitler, however, remained silent on this suggestion. Hitler, incidentally, did not appear to be acting naturally at this time, Veesebmayer thought, although he could not specify anything in particular. Veesebmayer knew, he said, that Horthy did not like either Hitler personally or the Germans in general, and wanted to get out of the war, but felt that this was impossible for Horthy.

Veesebmayer thought it would have been wise for Hitler to have met his allies more often in conference,... Among other things, Veesebmayer thought — but did not tell Hitler — that he should let his allies know what the German post-war program for Europe was. In any case, Hitler might be able to explain things to Horthy in a conference.

Within about three weeks the group went to Salzburg, Veesebmayer staying at the Oesterreichshof, Ribbentrop at Fuschl and Hitler at Schloss Klessheim.

The Horthy Visit, March 17, 18, 19, 1944

Ribbentrop also endorsed the visit of Horthy, and the latter ultimately came to Schloss Klessheim, spending one night there. Veesenmayer took no part in the discussions at Schloss Klessheim, although he presumed that they were primarily concerned with military matters, since the military problem was uppermost, and in any case Hitler was not interested in anything else.

Until the last moment Veesenmayer could not be sure that he was going to be appointed Minister to Hungary, for both [SS chief Heinrich] Himmler and Martin Bormann, who considered him too moderate and independent, were opposed to him. They wanted to appoint an old Party man, Dr. Jury, the Gauleiter for Lower Austria. Jury was an M.D., an SS/Obergruppenfuehrer, and a true servant of Himmler, [Ernst] Kaltenbrunner and Bormann[;] while Veesenmayer was somewhat younger in years and in Party service. In the end, Hitler himself decided in favor of Veesenmayer, and Ribbentrop acquiesced, because of Veesenmayer's earlier correct analysis of the Hungarian situation.

The trip back to Budapest was made with two parties, one Hungarian and the other German, on March 18-19. Veesenmayer asserted that Horthy was a free man on the trip and not [in] the custody of Kaltenbrunner. The train left about 8 o'clock, as Veesenmayer recalled, stopping by pre-arrangement about 4 a.m., March 19, so that he and Kaltenbrunner could telephone Budapest. This time had been fixed for the entry of German troops into Hungary. He had heard about the German invasion plans three or four days prior to this, although he presumed that some plans, including all alternative possibilities, had been made at least two weeks before. The code word was Margherita, named after the island in the Danube at Budapest. Veesenmayer gave information to General von Greiffenberg, the German commander, that everything was all right, and all were returning to Budapest. Greiffenberg, in turn, was to advise von Kallay and have him come to the station to welcome the party. There would be no resistance on the part of the Hungarian troops.

At about 10 o'clock on the morning of March 19 the Ministers to Hungary were changed. [Obergruppenführer Dietrich] von Jagow went into Horthy's compartment on the train about 9.30 to present his letters of recall and Veesenmayer came in somewhat later to present his credentials. Horthy then asked Veesenmayer whom he proposed as von Kallay's successor; Veesenmayer suggesting Bela Imredy, Horthy indicated that this was impossible because of Imredy's Jewish blood, and expressed his surprise that he should be proposed by a Nazi. Veesenmayer added that Kaltenbrunner was also opposed to Imredy, along with the SD [*Sicherheitsdienst*, the Nazi Party's intelligence and security organ]. Dr. Hoettl, in addition, had written an attack on Imredy, and had proposed Count Pálffy [Fidél Pálffy], of the Hungarian National Socialist Party.

The train arrived in Budapest about 11 o'clock, and von Jagow and Veesenmayer went to the German Legation together, while Horthy went to the castle. Horthy was a free man, Veesenmayer averred, although there were

German "honor guards" posted at the castle. Horthy called a Crown Council in mid-afternoon, and arranged for the resignation of the Kallay government.

Veesenmayer went to work immediately, and during the next hour talked with a number of Hungarian leaders. Imredy came to the Legation, as did [Rátz], Raynics, Jurcek, and Ruskay. He sent a message to Bardossy as well. The next day Sztojai came, sent by Horthy, to ask if the German Government would agree to his appointment as Prime Minister. Veesenmayer telegraphed an inquiry to the Foreign Office, which answered it agreed, but would want to see the list of ministers. Sztojai met with the opposition leaders, made a list and showed it to Veesenmayer, who also proposed [Rátz] and suggested Jurcek. Horthy concurred.

Although Horthy told Veesenmayer that he liked German troops and did not object to the honor guard, the German military understood differently, and they were withdrawn. Moreover, within three to six days, Veesenmayer said, he obtained withdrawal of the German divisions. He said that he was not fearful at all of Hungarian resistance, since the people liked German soldiers and got along with them. From the OKW, however, came orders that Hungarian troops were to surrender their arms and remain in their posts. Veesenmayer protested this order and it was rescinded [editor: not entirely]. He exercised no pressure on the Government, he said — only "influence" — except where he had direct orders to the contrary and had to threaten people with the consequences if they did not obey. He always believed in the English "style" of government, i.e.: acting through the forms of Hungarian sovereignty, if not the substance.

In the course of an interrogation at Nuremberg September 10, 1945, Ribbentrop said he remembered clearly that two men were in Hungary when it was occupied. One was Veesenmayer; the other a man from Himmler [police commander SS *Obergruppenführer* Otto Winkelmann]. It was the latter who took a severe attitude, particularly about the Jews. Veesenmayer was "attacked because of his moderating influence". Veesenmayer would deal with officials in an official capacity, whereas Himmler's man would by-pass diplomatic channels. That created great difficulties for Veesenmayer, Ribbentrop related.

The German Legation in Budapest

Veesenmayer was now in full command of the German Legation in Budapest, and he had a number of able assistants.

Among these was Kurt Haller, about 32 years of age, who had studied law before the war, and had been a member of the Abwehr [the military intelligence organization of Admiral Canaris]. Veesenmayer had known him in connection with his own work on the Irish problem. Not satisfied with the Abwehr, Haller had obtained employment in the German Foreign Office, and worked for Keppler, breaking all connections with the Abwehr, although he kept his friends and contacts in that organization. Veesenmayer took him to Budapest

on March 19, 1944, because he knew his abilities, although Haller had never been there before. He served as Veesenmayer's intelligence officer and had contacts with all parties and groups, and especially with Major Szalasi. Haller was very able and objective in analyzing a situation, but had an appendectomy at the end of October 1944, and was last seen about April 29, 1945. He had good relations with Baron Kemeny [Gábor Kemény], Szalasi's Foreign Minister and tried to get into touch with Count Bethlen but failed.

It was through Haller that Veesenmayer first came into contact with Carl Berthold Franz Rekowski, his personal Referent in Budapest, who also had had connections with the Abwehr during the early part of the war. Rekowski was a business man who had lived in New York and Mexico City, and had done especially well in the paper and oil business in Mexico. Rekowski did not like the war and was not a politician, but was a "one hundred percent money-maker". He was never a member of the party. Rekowski had had charge of the welfare of the Grand Mufti and Rashid Ali Gailani, and his wife had received a medal for her domestic services in this connection. Rekowski had entered the Foreign Office as a war service, and was a very good man, efficient and agreeable. Veesenmayer had called him to Salzburg in March 1944 and had taken him along to Budapest, having met him four or five times before.

Sometimes when Veesenmayer was "desperate" in Budapest, in view of the unfavorable development of the war, he would go to Rekowski's apartment, and on one occasion Rekowski expressed his bitterness with those who had got Germany into the war and brought on disaster. Veesenmayer had agreed with these sentiments. Rekowski's only ambition was to get it over with and leave Germany for ever. As his personal secretary and "right hand man", Rekowski had his office just outside that of Veesenmayer, and was in charge of passport matters as consul in Budapest; but his primary work was with Veesenmayer. Rekowski was also Veesenmayer's contact with Winkelmann, who was not so "agreeable" to Veesenmayer.

Gerhard Feine, about fifty years old, was a Geheimrat in the Foreign Office, and had the usual duties pertaining to that office. A career diplomat, Feine had first met Veesenmayer in the Belgrade Legation in 1940.

Adamovic, Referent for legal problems, was ill most of the time, and was succeeded by Grell, but there was very little for either to do in war time.

Bruenhof was Referent for Press Relations between Germany and Hungary. He did not really control the Hungarian press, but did influence it. The Hungarian Government had its own controls, but most of the world news came through [the German news service] DNB. Bruenhof kept in touch with the Hungarian Press Office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also with the press office in the Ministry-Presidency of the Council. Bruenhof did not have to exercise much pressure since the Hungarian papers seldom got out of line.

Niebelschuetz was Radio attache and his problems were similar to those of the press Referent. There were very few difficulties in influencing the radio. The monitoring service was good, and Veesenmayer received daily reports.

Dr. Boden and Herr Englert were economic experts. Dr. Boden had been on the Board of Directors of the AEG and also of Standard and Veesenmayer had brought him to Hungary because of his expert economic judgment.

Katschinka was the Propagandareferent, but was not very active. He did, however, at times influence the press, radio, and the cinema through the use of money. Triska was Kulturreferent, but there was not much for this officer to do in wartime. Likewise, Meckel, Volksdeutscher Referent, was not very active, and was to boot ill with tuberculosis. He was not an important official, although Veesenmayer indicated that there were 1,000,000 Volksdeutsche in Hungary.

General [Hans] von Greiffenberg was the military attache in Budapest and Lt. General [Kuno Heribert] Fruettener the Air Attache. However both had active commands and in that capacity could and did pursue an independent course. In general, however, both officers were loyal to Veesenmayer, especially von Greiffenberg.

There were also consulates in Budapest (Rekowski), Kaschau [Kassa, today Košice] (Count Matuschka), Debre[c]en (Kampf), Klausenburg [Kolozsvár, today Cluj] (Strak), and Szeged (Lurtz). Telephone, telegraph and railway communications with the consulates, however, were extremely difficult, and [the consulates] were closed up one by one as the Russian front advanced.

Veessenmayer had a peculiar relationship with SS/Obergruppenfuehrer Otto Winkelmann, who was also Lt. Gen. of Police, since Winkelmann, was directly responsible to Himmler, not to Veessenmayer, and took his orders only from Himmler. Winkelmann had charge of matters pertaining to the Volksdeutsche, for example, since Himmler was in direct charge of the Volksdeutsche, Winkelmann also had direct orders from Himmler as to political and economic matters, and was independent of Veessenmayer in this respect. He was also independent in police matters, and the legation had no police attache, which was usual in other legations, for control of passports, criminals, etc. Because Himmler was the most important man in Germany after Hitler himself, people like Winkelmann often acted very independently. Veessenmayer had many difficulties with Winkelmann, although he did not dislike him personally. Especially outstanding were difficulties over the Mannfried [Manfréd] Weiss Case, the problem of Imredy, and the Jewish question. [Editor's note: these cases are discussed below, under separate headings.]

The Auslandsorganisation [AO]

The AO made its own policy in the Balkans, and sought its own information through its own sources. Veessenmayer had no connection with the AO. There were only about 1,000 Reichsdeutsche in Hungary, and the AO was not concerned with the Volksdeutsche. All in all, Veessenmayer felt that the AO was much overrated, and really played a very insignificant role in all Southeastern Europe, although Neuhausen, an AO representative, was active in Belgrade. On

the whole, the influence of the AO on foreign policy was bad, Veesenmayer thought, since such matters should have been a function of the legations, and "too many cooks spoil the broth". Veesenmayer said that it was a cardinal point with him that party politics should be left at home, and should not be mixed with foreign policy.

Many foreign countries had considered the AO a "fifth column", but Veesenmayer thought it actually rather ineffective and it certainly did more harm than good. Bohle, the leader of the AO was too young, and too ambitious, and too much of a "know-it-all". Veesenmayer had "reckoned" with Bohle in Wiesbaden on the Bodstadtstrasse, and had met him for the first time there. The one thing on which Veesenmayer agreed with Ribbentrop was with respect to Bohle and the AO, and he thought the entire Foreign Office was agreed as to that. On the other hand, the AO did very well in caring for wounded soldiers, giving them coffee and drinks, etc.

The Volksdeutsche

Few broad problems concerning the Hungarian Volksdeutsche arose during the war, although these Hungarians of German ethnic origin, through Dr. [Franz] Basch, their leader, made demands on the Hungarian Government for an enlargement of their rights. The primary question ("ninety percent of the problem") in wartime was concerned with luring young Volksdeutsche into the Waffen SS organization, since they could not enter the German army. Under an agreement between Winkelmann and the Hungarian War Minister in the Sztojai government, provision was made for their entry into the Waffen SS. This was supplemented by another agreement. Veesenmayer had nothing to do with these arrangements beyond that of formal approval and submission to Berlin. Before 1944 there were about 40,000 Volksdeutsche who had gone into the Waffen SS and about 30-40,000 in 1944. The 10th and 19th divisions were made up of Volksdeutsche, but few of them actually saw combat.

Veesebmayer's Instructions as Minister in Hungary

As Minister to Hungary, Veesebmayer had something more than the normal duties of a Minister. He was to form new government with men who favored German influence in Hungary, he was to coordinate the German and Hungarian efforts in the war, and to help Hungarian matters of communication (railroads, dams, etc.). His mission, however, did not include 1) military matters which were referred to General von Greiffenberg, 2) police questions, including the Jewish problem, which were in the province of Winkelmann, who was directly responsible to Himmler, and 3) the problem of the Volksdeutsche, which was also within Winkelmann's independent province. Veesebmayer was in

charge of economic problems, generally, but the Foreign Office had sent him Dr. Boden [economic] attache, who had been AEG Director in Berlin. Under Dr. Boden was also the DIKO (Deutsche Industrie Kommission), whose task it was to coordinate German-Hungarian industry.

The Sztojai Government, March 19 - end of August 1944

Veesenmayer had excellent relation with Sztojai, who had been Hungarian Minister to Berlin, throughout his period in office as Prime Minister of Hungary. Sztojai was a pleasant man, although frequently ill, having come to Budapest from a sanatorium; he had to take frequent rests. Veesenmayer also had few protests from Horthy during this period, and Horthy once told him that he was a "correct", good man. Horthy did not like the SD or the SS, however, but there were no sharp conflicts.

Sztojai tried to found a single party, since he did not like party conflicts, but Veesenmayer felt that such a fusion of parties was impossible. Sztojai finally resigned because of illness. It was also true that he was not an able politician; moreover, Sztojai knew that the entourage around Horthy had been working against him, and this constituted another reason for his resignation. [Rátz] had resigned of his own accord in May. He could have been a man of influence, but liked the easy life too well to exert himself in this direction.

The Case of the Mannfried [Manfréd] Weiss Works

One of the serious problems which arose during the period of the Sztojai government was that of the Mannfried Weiss Works, the largest concern in Hungary, employing about 20,000 people. This plant was situated on the Island of [Csepel] in the Danube, and was owned by some Jews who were in the hands of Himmler's SS near Vienna. When Sztojai came to power, the Government, in its law concerning Jewish possessions had decreed that Jewish plants were to go to the Government; moreover, Jews were forbidden to dispose of their property in ways which would avoid seizure or purchase by the government.

The case broke during the latter part of May or the early part of June 1944. Without the knowledge of the Hungarian Government or of Veesenmayer, a special representative of Himmler, Bechler made an agreement with the Jewish owners, ([Ferenc] Chorin, [Sámuel? Leó?] Goldberger, and Mannfried [Manfréd] Weiss [Jr.?.]) to purchase their shares in behalf of the SS. In return, these men and their families, about thirty people in all, were to be transported in two airplanes to Lisbon. [Editor's note: Leó Goldberger refused to leave the country with his relatives. He died of malnutrition soon after he was liberated from Nazi concentration camp in March, 1945.] Some millions of marks and jewellery were involved. When the Hungarian Government heard of it there were protests,

and Imredy was incensed about the matter. Veesenmayer told them that he had known nothing about the matter.

Finally, Winkelmann came to see Veesenmayer and informed him that the Weiss Works had been purchased on the orders of Himmler and that Veesenmayer would have to help obtain the consent of the Hungarian Government. This he refused to do, and reporting to the Foreign Office, elaborated on the repercussions this action would have in Hungarian-German relations.

About June 6-7, Sztojai went to Salzburg to see Hitler. One day before Veesenmayer had been called to Salzburg, and had told Ribbentrop about the problem, but Ribbentrop could do nothing and advised Veesenmayer to see Himmler. Veesenmayer then saw Himmler during the night, but was told he was a weakling and neither a fitting representative of Germany in Hungary nor of the SS (in which Veesenmayer held the honorary rank of Brigadefuehrer). Himmler indicated that if Veesenmayer did not cease to protest, he would advise the Fuehrer, who had agreed as to the purchase, and Veesenmayer would then be opposing the will of the Fuehrer. Himmler also remarked that he felt it was a good thing if the minister did not always know everything that was going on in the country to which he was assigned.

Veesenmayer at this point remarked that he had never been a member of the SD, and was only an honorary member of the SS, and was in no way responsible to Himmler. Later, at a meeting of his legation staff, he had told the members that he would take nothing from the Jews and that they must not. He further remarked that he had offered his resignation to Ribbentrop, saying that he could not return to Hungary after what had happened, but that Ribbentrop had refused to accept his resignation and had ordered him to return to Budapest. Moreover, he was ordered not to speak of the case again, the alternative being the concentration camp.

The Imredy Case

A second serious problem developed in the case of Bela Imredy. Veesenmayer originally had wanted Imredy as Minister President of Hungary. Later, however, he suggested that Sztojai name him as Minister for Economic Affairs, a post that would embody not only the usual functions of this ministry, but those of the ministries of communications, agriculture, and exports and imports. Imredy would act in this capacity as a sort of "coordinator" for economic affairs. Imredy visited Horthy about the beginning of May, and Sztojai spoke to him about the matter. Jarross and Kunderi [sic, Antal Kunder?], of Imredy's party, were already in the government, and Sztojai proposed Imredy's name to the Regent, who agreed to accept him. Veesenmayer thought that this appointment would be a tremendous help to Dr. Boden, the economist of the Legation.

Nevertheless, Veesenmayer felt the opposition of SS Leader Kaltenbrunner and SS/Obergruppenfuehrer Winkelmann. Although Kaltenbrunner visited Budapest often during this period, Veesenmayer did not see him. At the end of July or the beginning of August, Winkelmann gave an interview denouncing Imredy because of his Jewish descent. Suddenly there was a whispering campaign. Imredy, Jarross and Kunde[r] protested to Veesenmayer; Imredy could not understand how one German agency could favour him and another denounce him. Veesenmayer indicated that he had known nothing of the attack — and naturally could not work against himself! He reported the matter to the Foreign Office, and offered for the second time to resign because of these SS activities, over which he had no control at all. But it was now too late, for Winkelmann complained to Neubacher about divided responsibilities and policies, but Neubacher reminded him that in other countries the Germans had “two, three, four or six” people who made policy in as many different directions.

The Jewish Problem

A third problem which took form and substance during the period of the Sztojai Government was the Jewish question. The problem began to develop first in the provinces and then spread to Budapest. The Sztojai regime [sic, the Imrédy government in 1939] was the first to promulgate anti-Semitic regulations with respect to property and other matters, and later governments added to them. There were several hundred thousand Jews in Budapest. The Jews, inimical both to the government and the Germans, struck against working on fortifications. The reports from the foreign press about the Jewish question added fuel to the fire; Horthy, moreover, had received communications both from the Pope and from the King of Sweden about the middle of September concerning this matter.

In May 1944, Sztojai had made an agreement with Germany as to sending Jews to Germany for work, and a commission had gone to Berlin to look into the problem and make arrangements. [SS *Obersturmbannführer* Adolf] Eichmann, a special representative of Himmler on Jewish problems, Winkelmann and Himmler himself were primarily involved. But the movement of Jews to Germany had been halted when [General Géza] Lakatos succeeded Sztojai, because the Hungarian Government wanted them to work on fortifications around Budapest. About 50,000 were involved in this work, including men and women. Some had already been sent to Austria to construct underground war plants. There had been no protests about the matter from the Hungarian Government, although Horthy showed some concern about food, clothing and shelter for these Jews.

The main difference between the Sztojai and Lakatos regimes in the matter of the Jewish problem, in Veesenmayer's opinion, was that the latter wanted the Jews to work in Hungary, while Sztojai was in favour of transporting them to Germany for labour. Altogether, Veesenmayer thought, from 500,000 to

400,000 Jews had been sent from Hungary to Germany. Although he had sent some telegrams to the Foreign Office concerning the transportation of these Jews, Eichmann and Winkelmann were primarily responsible, especially the former.

Asked if he had received any instructions or communications from the Foreign Office in this respect, Veesenmayer said that in March 1944, Ribbentrop had asked him what to do about the Jewish problem, and in the course of the talk had suggested that the Jews might be sent to America! But the Hungarian Jewish problem, Veesenmayer reiterated, was not in his hands.

During the Szalasi regime, however, Veesenmayer had protested, he said, about the treatment of the Jews who were working on the Ostwall on the Austro-Hungarian frontier. There were no trains, and food and shelter against the cold were very poor. Not many more Jews had been sent out at this time, however, most of them were concentrated in Budapest.

Horthy himself was bitterly anti-Semitic. He had fought against the Bela Kun regime and often accused Jews of being Communist in sympathy. During the period under discussion Horthy had condemned many Jews to death. He hated the Jews as few did, and once referred to Imredy as a Jew. [Editor's note: on this subject see the pertinent parts of the introductory essay to this volume.]

Veesenmayer said that he thought the great shame of Germany was the handling of the Jewish problem. Germany had once had a great name in the arts and sciences, now, because of the Hitler regime, the German name had been dragged in the mire. Once he had been proud to be a German, but now he wondered if a German could lift up his head again. The crime of the people like him was to have served such a regime, he thought, even if they had not always known what was going on, as he said he had not. He first learned of conditions in concentration camps, he remarked, when he was brought to a prison camp and shown pictures.

The Lakatos Government, End of August - October 15, 1944

The military situation dominated the entire picture in Hungary during the period of the Lakatos Government, and the position of Hungary, as well as that of the Government, became increasingly grave. The members of the opposition who were in the Cabinet protested against the weakness of Lakatos, and a movement had begun to concentrate all the opposition elements into a National bloc. This movement consisted of the leaders of the Nationalist parties and the President of the Parliament, together with members of the Hungarian House of Lords. The leader of the so-called Ostfrontkaempferbund was also involved, and telegrams were sent to all members of Parliament and the Government. For the first time Szalasi took part in such a movement, since he felt that the national interest demanded political unity. A committee of ten to twelve members of the group out of 150, including General [Rátz], went to Lakatos and urged maximum

protection of the war against Russia. Veesenmayer sympathized with them, but did not take an active part in the movement.

Another factor which contributed to the ultimate resignation of Lakatos was concerned with the journey of Col. General Miklos [Béla Miklós], together with his secretary, to the Russians with proposals for terms. Horthy was a party to this move, although Lakatos knew nothing about it at the time....

The Arrest of Horthy's Son, October 15, 1944

The SD had information that Admiral Horthy's son, at this time, was in contact with the Russians and also with the British and the Americans, and had been so for about a year. This had been reported to Kaltenbrunner, Himmler and Hitler. Veesenmayer had also heard that an English officer was supposed to be in Budapest, but there were many rumours and he did not believe many of them, although the SD was well informed. Veesenmayer learned, too, about an American mission, composed of three officers, which had arrived in Budapest in March [editor's note: the OSS' Mission Sparrow], before his advent as Minister. This mission had got into touch with some officers of the War Ministry. Horthy was in Salzburg at the time, and, at the instance [sic, insistence?] of General Buettere, they were turned over to the Germans. There was also an unknown plane, with unknown occupants, which had flown to Italy.

When Horthy's son was interrogated by the Germans later on, it was learned that Horthy himself had been informed of all these moves. There had been no earlier proof as to the matter, however, as the Hungarian police under Lakatos were not very helpful in such problems. Lakatos himself was very poorly informed and not often au courant as to the activities of Horthy and his entourage. Indeed, the weakness of the Lakatos government was apparent to everybody.

Until the last moment, Lakatos worked closely with Veesenmayer, and did what he could during the hours of October 15-16 to avoid any armed conflict with the Germans. He told Veesenmayer that if he had known of Horthy's intrigues he would have resigned much earlier.

October 15, 1944 fell on Sunday. On this day there was a plot, organized by [Otto] Skorzeny, the "rescuer" of Mussolini, to get Horthy's son into custody by telling him that an agent of Marshall Tito wanted to see him. He was then approached [sic, captured] by the SD and taken to Vienna for interrogation.

The Abdication of the Regent, October 15-16, 1944

About noon on October 15, Veesenmayer went to Horthy, who protested against the arrest of this son and threatened to hold Veesenmayer as hostage. The entire Hungarian cabinet was also present at the castle by this time. Horthy

reported to them on his contacts with the Allies, and said that he had decided to ask the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States for terms, although not unconditional terms. Veesenmayer protested that he would have to inform his government, since he saw in such a move a definite break in Hungarian-German friendship. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office had sent Ambassador [Rudolf] Rahn (Italy) to Budapest to help Veesenmayer, since Ribbentrop was not sure that Veesenmayer could handle the situation alone.

Veesenmayer was only able to leave the castle grounds, strongly guarded by Hungarian troops, after he had protested for about fifteen minutes. Rahn then talked with Horthy for about forty-five minutes, at the end of which Horthy agreed not to come to terms with the enemy. At the same time, however, the Budapest radio was announcing his request for terms.

From that moment, in view of his perfidy, it was decided to have nothing further to do with Horthy. Many Hungarian leaders now came to see Veesenmayer and said that the time had come for Germany to intervene in the Hungarian situation. So German movements, prepared well in advance by the military and police, were begun under General von Greiffenberg and SS/Obergruppenfuehrer Winkelmann. The order for action was given at 6 A.M. on October 16. Only the radio was seized on October 15, in order to prevent any further demoralization of the Hungarian people and troops.

On the evening of October 15, about 8 P.M., Lakatos telephoned Veesenmayer saying that he and Foreign Minister Henyey [Gusztáv Hennyey] would come to see him within half an hour. Lakatos had been surprised at Horthy's statement, and promised to do everything to avoid trouble. Veesenmayer, still hoping to avoid conflict, nevertheless had little confidence in the ability of Lakatos to avert it. During the meeting, moreover, he had word from the military that the streets of the Castle had been mined, and that he was therefore virtually a prisoner in the Legation. Lakatos was sceptical, but found the information to be correct.

Veesenmayer then sent a message to General von Greiffenberg, who was just outside Budapest, to take action. About midnight two German officers arrived, and soon after Lakatos telephoned Veesenmayer requesting that he come to the Prime Minister's residence, which he refused to do in view of the mined streets. When the mines were moved from one of the streets, he sent Geheimrat Feine to Lakatos, and was informed that Horthy had agreed to resign under the seal and protection of the German Government, together with his family and some friends.

It was now about four o'clock in the morning of October 16. Veesenmayer tried to reach the German Foreign Office, but could not get an answer to his urgent message right away, in view of the hour. He wanted a reply as to Horthy's terms, since military action against the Castle was to start at 6 A.M., and he desired to avoid bloodshed. He then got into touch with SS Obergruppenfuehrer Bach [presumably Eric von dem Bach-Zelewski, a "crisis specialist"], who had been sent down especially for the job, and who outranked

both von Greiffenberg and Winkelmann. Veesenmayer said that there should be no shooting, in view of Horthy's offer, and Bach stated that if the Hungarians offered no resistance, there would be no shooting. Whereupon Veesenmayer (about 5.30 A.M.) informed Lakatos of the situation, and asked him, in order to prevent bloodshed, to give the Hungarian commander the order not to resist.

About 5.40 A.M. Ribbentrop's reply, accepting the Horthy offer to resign, arrived. Bloodshed would now be avoided, and Veesenmayer showed that he was proud of his part in preventing it. When he had the Foreign Office's agreement, Veesenmayer sent Geheimrat Feine again to Lakatos to bring him back so that he could inform Horthy. Lakatos arrived about 6.50 A.M., in full uniform. Veesenmayer got into his car, and with another car following, drove standing through the streets to the castle, past the Hungarian fortifications and lines of troops, and entered the last barricades on foot. He found Horthy in full uniform, as if he had been waiting for him.

Horthy was not in good "constitution" at this time, yet not entirely "broken". He was polite, though not friendly. Veesenmayer announced that he had come to place Horthy under German "protection" and to take him and his family to Germany. Horthy was placed in a small house under German guard, and the troops were advised not to molest him in any way. Lakatos accompanied him. Horthy, now primarily concerned about his family, inquired about his wife, his daughter-in-law and small grandson. Veesenmayer later found that Horthy's wife was in the establishment of the Papal Nuncio, and sent Feine to [look] after her. Following this episode, Veesenmayer went to the home of Lakatos, through streets lined with German troops and "Tiger" tanks. He ordered the house locked up to protect it. His first great task of the day was now accomplished.

Back at the legation, somewhat after seven o'clock, Veesenmayer found the house full of people, for the day before he had given help to some members of the Opposition who were anxious about their personal safety. Altogether there were about twenty or thirty people present, among them Imredy, Szalasi and Bardossy. Veesenmayer's wife provided coffee and cakes for them. Rahn had brought Szalasi there in Rekowski's diplomatic uniform, since they were afraid that he might be "spotted".

After breakfast, about ten o'clock, Veesenmayer went to see Horthy again in order to take Lakatos to talk with him. He said there was now no way to go back and Horthy would have to resign. Horthy admitted to him that he had been at fault in his contacts with the enemy. Horthy also agreed that Lakatos should resign and that Szalasi should become Premier, but on the condition that his son should be allowed to join his family on the way to Germany. Veesenmayer agreed to this, but said he would have to report it to the Foreign Office. He left Horthy about 11 A.M.

Back in the Legation, Veesenmayer saw Rahn and asked him to inquire by telephone whether Ribbentrop would agree to send Horthy's son with the family. Rahn obtained Ribbentrop's consent. Veesenmayer then told Horthy in

the presence of Rahn and Lakatos that when the situation had cleared up, Horthy's son would be allowed to join his family. Veesenmayer had carried this through as a point of honour.

Yet when all was over and Horthy had been brought to Waldbichel near Munich, the son had not yet joined the family. Learning of this about fifteen days later, Veesenmayer telegraphed Ribbentrop, pointing out that this placed him in an impossible position. He received no reply, so he wrote a letter to the Fuehrer, but heard in November from Doernberg that the Fuehrer had learned that the son had been implicated in the negotiations with the Allies, and refused to release him. That closed the matter. [Editor's note: Miklós Horthy Jr. was reunited with his father and family only after the war.]

The Szalasi Government, October 16 - May 1945

Szalasi visited Horthy in the morning of October 16, but had a rather unhappy interview, in view of Horthy's hatred of the man. Later in the morning, however, Horthy signed a statement in the presence of Veesenmayer and Lakatos, stipulating that he had resigned as Regent without force, and had agreed that Szalasi should be the new Premier of Hungary. He remarked that Szalasi was not his man, but he knew of no other who would take the responsibility at that time. But Horthy was now thinking only of his family and their safety, without any real thought for the country, according to Veesenmayer, who had lost all respect for the old man.

About five or six o'clock in the evening of October 16, Rahn and Veesenmayer began a series of meetings with Szalasi, Jurcek, Raynics, Imredy and Pallfy, together with other leaders of the Nationalist bloc, to discuss the formation for a new government which Veesenmayer wanted to [be] constituted as soon as possible in order to put a stop to the confusion and looting which had been prevalent for the last two days. Veesenmayer's aim was to avoid a 100% Szalasi government, in the end the new regime was made up of about one-half Szalasi men and one-half men from the Nationalist bloc. The government was formally constituted on the morning of October 17, with Szalasi as Premier. Horthy and his family were sent off in the company of Geheimrat Feine to exile and imprisonment in Germany.

The Szalasi government had "good will" but functioned only as the military situation permitted, which was now nearly hopeless; all that happened was "purely relative". Indeed, it was like a pot with twelve holes, Veesenmayer explained, with only ten fingers to stop the leaks. Szalasi tried to do his best, and insisted on acting "constitutionally". Not until November, for example, was he chosen as Regent in succession to Horthy. At about the same time a new Regency Council was chosen, composed of Raynics, Beragffy [Generál Károly Beregffy], and a jurist.

About December 4 or 5, 1944, Szalasi went to Berlin in the company of Veesenmayer and General von Greiffenberg, who met Szalasi at Hag[y]eshalom, on the German-Hungarian frontier. Shortly after their arrival Szalasi paid a courtesy call in Ribbentrop and then talked with the Fuehrer about the military situation in the presence of Greiffenberg and [Field Marshal Wilhelm] Keitel [Chief of Staff of the OKW]. Nothing of any significance took place at this meeting.

After the visit, the party returned to Hungary. The Hungarian Government, meanwhile, had been evacuated from Budapest, and the German legation was scattered about in order to keep in contact with the various agencies it had to deal with.... But it was impossible to carry on consistently or intelligently — there was no gasoline, no train service, no telephone or telegraph communications. Veesenmayer's intelligence agent, Haller, was in the hospital, but in any case there was nothing for him to do. It was now purely a military, not a political problem.

At the end of March 1945 Veesenmayer left Hungary and went to Semmering for two or three days; then, because the Russians were coming closer, to Salzburg, where Szalasi also remained for a while.... In his last discussion with Veesenmayer, Szalasi informed him that he proposed to go to Werten to surrender to the British. Warned, however, that he might fall into the hands of the Russians, he remained at Werten, and was married in the interval! Veesenmayer finally surrendered to the American forces about sixty kilometres from Salzburg, on May 14, 1945.