



Eszterházy Károly University
Doctoral School of History

Doctoral (PhD.) Thesis Summary

**Albert Szent-Györgyi's political and
public life in Hungary**

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Theses

1. Preliminaries

Albert Szent-Györgyi was the first Nobel prize winner of Hungarian origin and nationality, who received the prize for his work partially done in Hungary. Thanks to this recognition our homeland became the nineteenth among all countries with this prestigious scientific achievement. A monograph on Szent-Györgyi has been written in the USA before, however our work attempts to settle an old debt of social science research in Hungary: a single, scientifically valuable monograph covering all of his Hungarian activities based on Hungarian sources from a Hungarian author had not been produced so far. We believe that, by adding to the work of R. W. Moss, which was mainly based on American sources, a 'native' portrait of Szent-Györgyi using Hungarian sources will complete the entire picture.

1.1 Books on Szent-Györgyi

The first extensive collection of sources, also a biography in one volume, is the work of Tibor Szabó és Andor Zallár and has seen the light of the day in 1989. It mainly focuses on his specific activities in Szeged.¹ This collection, which is managed by Csongrád County Archives, is an extremely valuable collection of resources, and is still an indispensable tool for research, despite the fact that the biographical part is quite short, since it only covers the life of the scientist until 1945.

In the meantime however, in the United States, a comprehensive monograph focusing on his scientific work has been published by Ralph W. Moss², an author of cancer research. Its greatest asset was that Moss was able to have conversations with Szent-Györgyi while he was still alive, so he was able to record his thoughts. Later it became the most popular source for researchers of science and became a bestseller in the international book market. In his monograph by a scientific approach, Moss also tried to reconstruct the historical events in Hungary at the time³, his sources and materials of expertise were all of American origin, so despite his greatest efforts he could not give a comprehensive and complete picture of Szent-Györgyi's Hungarian activities. In addition, we also found that Szent-Györgyi did not go all out in his conversations just to make sure that he did not bring any shame on his own

¹ Tibor Szabó – Andor Zallár 1989. 'Szent-Györgyi Albert Szegeden és a Szent-Györgyi Gyűjtemény', (Tanulmányok Csongrád megye történetéből XV.) Csongrád County Archives, Szeged.

² Moss, Ralph, W. 1988, Free radical: Albert Szent-Györgyi and the battle over Vitamin C, Paragon House, New York. Magyarul Ralph W. Moss: Szent-Györgyi Albert, Typotex, Budapest.

³ Moss himself had Hungarian ancestors.

homeland.⁴ The recently published work of János Marton and Kornélia Pap: *Kihívások, küzdelmek, kalandok a tudományban és a társadalomban, Szent-Györgyi Albert Magyarországon*⁵ also does not fulfill the requirement of completeness. The work based on the respectable amount of source material⁶ lacks archival documents⁷ and misses the latest research results of the last ten years, mostly in Szeged. Although the scientific section is very thorough, the volume is not edited chronologically.⁸ Therefore it is strongly recommended to use it with caution.

One of the outstanding products of Szent-Györgyi research is the first three volumes of the 'Szegedi Egyetemi Tudástár' series⁹, published by University of Szeged Press in 2014, titled *Szent-Györgyi Albert szellemi öröksége, The intellectual heritage of Albert Szent-Györgyi* and *Szent-Györgyi Albert a Délmagyarországban és a New York Times-ban*¹⁰. The first two volumes differ only in the language used, but the studies added by each have contributed novel aspects to our knowledge base.¹¹ The third volume, by publishing original newspaper articles, has also been a great help to our recent research.

The work of István Wisinger, the documentary novel titled *Egy Nobel-díjas kém*, fits the genre of a novel rather than being a source of credibility. Although it uses a lot of the results of the corresponding scientific research, the author's fantasy surpasses the content of these sources, so in this setting we could only address his misconceptions. In addition to these, a well-used and very valuable source of information, thanks to literary historian László Péter, is the previously unpublished philosophical work of Szent-Györgyi, originally written in French, titled *A béke élet- és erkölcstana*.¹²

⁴ Moss often quotes the autobiographies of Szent-Györgyi published in the United States of America, but does not identify the source. It is possible that he did this because Szent-Györgyi did not tell him more than what he had already written. He also told the most important reason for his emigration to a Hungarian journalist, a fellow countryman, who visited him in 1984.

⁵ Gondolat Kiadó, 2017.

⁶ Processes almost all journalistic material from local papers.

⁷ Uses only published archival materials, does not research unpublished ones.

⁸ After(!) discussing emigration (1947), there is a single chapter on the Nobel Prize (1937) and two on rectorhood. (1940-41.)

⁹ The editors of the series are László Dux, István Hannus, József Pál and Ilona Újszászi.

¹⁰ Edited by István Hannus.

¹¹ The volume - reflecting Szent-Györgyi's perception - simultaneously contains scientific and humanistic works on an equal footing. It also includes the studies of historian Tamás Vajda, literary historian József Pál, and pedagogue historian Csaba Jancsák.

¹² Szent-Györgyi Albert 2001. *A béke élet- és erkölcstana*, (transl. by János Rakonczai, edited by László Péter), Bába és Társai Ltd., Szeged.

Recently, we have prepared our own collection of source material, titled *A legendás tudós, Szent-Györgyi Albert önéletrajzi értekezései*¹³ based on these precedents, to correct the shortcomings of the previous editions.

1.2 Published studies on Szent-Györgyi

In addition to the relatively small set of summaries¹⁴, we also had access to a number of scientific studies, each focusing on a specific topic of Szent-Györgyi's activities. His role in the Resistance was excellently drawn up by historians Sándor M. Kiss and Lajos Izsák¹⁵, György Péteri wrote a summary of his academic reforms¹⁶, while Gábor Palló analyzed his relationship with the Soviets by presenting a new source.¹⁷ The mission in Istanbul had been written up by historian Gyula Juhász¹⁸ in several of his works. Sándor M. Kiss¹⁹, and later Csaba Jancsák prepared a dissertation on the student organization called Szegedi Egyetemi Ifjúság. Literary historian József Pál analyzed the philosophical thinking of Szent-Györgyi, also in an other work he updated the poetry of Szent-Györgyi for us.²⁰ István Hannus, a professor of chemistry, wrote about the analysis of vitamin C in an enjoyable format for the layman,²¹ and the economic benefits and consequences of the discovery were processed by historian Tamás Vajda.²² The political activities of Szent-Györgyi after 1945 were recently researched by Mária Palasik.²³

2. Objectives

The aim of our work was to produce a complete scientific monograph on Szent-Györgyi's public life and activities in Hungary, based primarily on primer sources. Our aim was to show what aspirations could have motivated public participation of such a highly

¹³ 2017, Szeged. György Györgyi's autobiographical treatises were published by Gondolat Kiadó in English in the United States in 1983, with significant omissions causing misunderstandings. For this reason we published four of Szent-Györgyi's writings, which involved obtaining US publishing licenses, in a bilingual volume with the support of the Goodwill Pharma Foundation for Health, a non-governmental organization.

¹⁴ István Zombori 1981, Péter Miklós 2007.

¹⁵ Sándor M. Kiss 1983, Lajos Izsák 1983 and Lajos Izsák 1994.

¹⁶ György Péteri 1994. Modernity versus democracy: The politics of Albert Szent-Györgyi 1945–47, *Hungarian Studies* 9/1–2. 181–199.

¹⁷ Gábor Palló 1993 and Gábor Palló 1994.

Gábor Palló wrote an excellent work on the German scientific model and the Rockefeller Foundation, which we also used in our work. See Gábor Palló 2002b.

¹⁸ Gyula Juhász 1973, Gyula Juhász 1977. Gyula Juhász 2014.

¹⁹ Sándor M. Kiss 1974, M. Kiss 1995.

²⁰ József Pál 2014a és 2014b.

²¹ István Hannus 2014.

²² Tamás Vajda 2014.

²³ Mária Palasik 2017.

respected scholar held in high regard in public opinion, and what kind of room for maneuver he had in the 20th century in Hungary. Our goal was to expose public activities in chronological order in such a way, since the subject is a scientist, that we could provide the triple coverage of his scientific endeavors, public events, and political activity. Of course, we also covered events of his private life in case the biography demanded it. It was our intention to emphasize that the motive of his political activities spanning several historical periods has always remained the same, i.e. the social and scientific convergence of our country to the more developed western states. He also approached politics from the point of view developed by his profession, from the point of objective thinking and problem solving analysis. First, we introduce the roots of his public interest, the motivation derived from his family, and also clarify the disputed circumstances of his origin. Our aim was then to draw the curve of public life, which originated from the affection of Klebelsberg, the university leadership duties, the Istanbul mission and resistance activities leading to the increasing publicity during the coalition period, which nevertheless ended with the emigration that saved his personal freedom.

We used primary sources to uncover political conflicts, to clarify the errors in his oeuvre, and to attempt to set up an unbiased career path free from any political "setting".

3. Research methods, sources

In our dissertation, we sought answers to questions like what might have motivated Szent-Györgyi to become a public figure, and who were the possible role models for him during these activities. How were these received by the political leadership in the Horthy era and then during the Soviet occupation? How did he, as a natural scientist, relate to politics? What conflicts did he face, how much political influence was he allowed by the political elite of the Horthy era, and then after 1945, what degree of leeway was he given by the Muscovite politicians? Why did he finally decide to emigrate?

In our work, our primary sources were archival documents, and we also used resource-transmission electronic databases and source publications. The autobiographies of Szent-Györgyi and all his public statements (parliamentary speeches, press articles, speeches, etc.) were also very important sources for us.

In addition to written sources, we also used methods of oral tradition. We used statements made by Dr. Mária Vollemann, a student at the university lead by Szent-Györgyi, and talked to János Vincze, a biophysicist who came in contact with Szent-Györgyi abroad.

3.1 Archival documents

Regarding the period after 1945 we reviewed material from the Magyar-Szovjet Művelődési Társaság of the **National Archives of Hungary (MNL OL P.2148 Magyar-Szovjet Társaság 1945-54. 1. d., 30. d.)**, the **Minutes of the Cabinet Council (MNL OL XIX-A 83-a)**, documents of the **Ministry of Interior (XIX-B-1-h, II. sorozat 83.doboz 11)** and **certain records of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education (MNL OL XIX.-1-1-e VKM Külföldi kapcs. 18. d.)**.

From the materials of the **Csongrád County Archives** of the National Archives of Hungary we examined the documents of the **Rector's Office of the Horthy Miklós University** for the academic year 1940-41 in order to reconstruct the principal operation of then rector Szent-Györgyi. (CSML VIII.5. Horthy Miklós Tudományegyetem Rektori Hivatal iratai 1940–41.) From the same university we used several documents of the Faculty of Humanities.

We studied the activities of Szent-Györgyi as a dean and vice dean recorded in the **1933-34-35 annual reports of the Faculty of Medicine of the Ferencz József University**, found in the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Medicine of University of Szeged.

From the **Historical Archives of the State Security Services**, we studied the documents of the Szent-Györgyi-Taurus resistance activity under the name ÁBTL-3.1.9.-V-118227 and the ÁBTL-3.2.4.-K-1414. Regarding the emigration, the case file of the Hungarian Community Affairs (ÁBTL - 3.1.9- V-2000) was of assistance to us, in addition we could gain insight to the operational records of Szent-Györgyi.

The **Szent-Györgyi Collection**, which was assembled by the librarians of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Szeged with great work and diligence since 1937 in honor of the prestigious event, and is now being maintained by the Klebelsberg Library of the University of Szeged, was of great help to us in researching the circumstances of the Nobel Prize.

3.2 Printed primary sources

Of course, we have had a great deal of help by the source documenting studies of each period.²⁴ Such as the Minutes of the Cabinet Council for the period of 1945 and after, (several

²⁴ László Szűcs (editor, notary) 1997A, Minutes of the Cabinet Council of Ministers of the Government of Miklós Dálnoki (Provisional National Government) 1944. december 23 - 1945 november 15. Volume A (II. National Publications of the Hungarian National Archives 28.), National Archives of Hungary, Budapest

volumes of the II. National Publications of the Hungarian National Archives) concerning the Soviet relationship, the source publication of Antal Gönyei²⁵, etc.

3.3 Electronic transmission source databases

The **Arcanum** and **Hungaricana, Délmagyarchív** databases were used for all topics.

We also used the database of the **Österreichische Nationalbibliothek** for researching the activities of Szent-Györgyi during the First World War.

http://anno.onb.ac.at/info/nvv_info.htm

We used the <https://www.familysearch.org/en/> and www.rakovszky.net databases to find out about Szent-Györgyi's family roots, as well as the <https://www.nobelprize.org/> database for research regarding his Nobel Prize. For historical research on the university we used the UnivHistoria repository of the University of Szeged.

We have also benefited greatly from the memoirs of contemporaries, friends, and the contemporary press releases we could find. Regarding the latter, we have used articles from at least 20-25 of different types of press products ranging from the local paper *Délmagyarország*, all the way to the national publications of the likes of *Magyar Nemzet*.

3.4 Professional literature

We have also processed the most recent volumes of studies on the era, regarding the resistance, such as: László Szelke's *A Gresham a nácik ellen* (Jaffa Kiadó, 2016, Debrecen) and Gellért Kovács's *Alkonyat Budapest felett* (Libri Publishing Hungary, 2015, Budapest), we were informed by the volumes of Andor Ladányi²⁶ on Klebelsberg, and later about the higher education policy of the 1930s. We have also incorporated the studies of several historians on the subject of that particular historical period (including, but not limited to): Ignác Romsics, Levente Püski, Gábor Újváry, Sándor M. Kiss, Gyula Juhász, etc. We used the writings of physicists Zoltán Bay and György Marx regarding the personalities and insights of Szent-Györgyi, while István Hargittai's volumes on scientific history informed us about contemporary Soviet science, along with Russian literature.

With regard to the above sources and the literature used, we could only highlight a select few of the more than two hundred items.

²⁵ Antal Gönyei (comp.) 1988. *Dokumentumok Magyarország nemzetközi kulturális kapcsolatainak történetéből (1945–1948)*, (Sources in the History of the Hungarian People's Democracy, Volume VIII.) New Hungarian Central Archives, Budapest.

²⁶ Andor Ladányi 2000 and Ladányi 2002.

4. New scientific results

The political interest of Szent-Györgyi originated from his family roots, as the ancestors of Szent-Györgyi set an example by their patriotic activities in 1848. His paternal great-grandfather, Imre Szent-Györgyi, as royal official, signed the union law merging Erdély with Hungary, and his son Imre was actively involved in the legal works of the reattachment of Erdély. While Szent-Györgyi may have inherited interest in politics from the paternal branch of his family, the maternal branch may have contributed to his interest in science policy (besides the medical profession). His maternal ancestors, great grandfather, grandfather and uncle were all rectors of the University of Pest.²⁷ His uncle, professor of anatomy Mihály Lenhossék, also became vice-president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1936/37, only beaten by Archduke József in the election process.

After World War I, Szent-Györgyi was forced to work abroad after receiving his university degree in medicine, due to his need to make a living. In his work, the above family traditions would never have evolved without Klebelsberg, as Minister of Culture, inviting him back home from Cambridge by creating the necessary conditions for his research to continue. For Klebelsberg actually embraced the word of the age, and treated the natural sciences according to their importance. Szent-Györgyi tasted the public life along his side for the first time, which created a lifelong interest in him. Together with Klebelsberg, they negotiated with the Rockefeller Foundation and successfully won research funding for scientific and medicinal projects. Only thanks to this sufficient funding Szent-Györgyi's research on vitamin C was possible.

Klebelsberg presumably had further goals to achieve with Szent-Györgyi, already counting on him as his future successor, when his sadly premature death ended the relationship between these two exceptional people. Unfortunately, Szent-Györgyi could not find among the successors of Klebelsberg, a like-minded, supportive-minded Minister of Culture, who would also have been a partner in his appreciation of science. However the intent, the ambition, that he wanted to do better for the culture of his country remained with him. Throughout the Horthy era, he was denied this opportunity, although he himself tried to build relationships with the political elite, such as István Bethlen, but to no avail. As a university leader, he was in constant conflict with the Ministry of Culture, most often with Bálint Hóman, who had been minister for 10 years.

²⁷ His great-grandfather Mihály Ignác Lenhossék was rector of the University of Pest in the 1817/18 academic year, his grandfather József Lenhossék in the 1878/79 academic year, and his uncle Mihály Lenhossék in 1914-1915.

This relationship was embodied in the struggle against restrictions, withdrawals and cutbacks from the Ministry of Culture. Together with the leadership of the city of Szeged, they struggled for a long time for the unbroken survival of the Ferencz József University. In Szeged, first the Faculty of Law and then the Faculty of Medicine were in danger. The city fought for the survival of the former, while the latter owed its continued existence to the efforts of Szent-Györgyi. In fact, Szent-Györgyi held the terms of the agreement with the Rockefeller Foundation, which required the state to repay the subsidy in the event of the termination of the subsidized institution. Therefore, the closure of the faculty would not have resulted in savings but in more public state expenditure.

Unfortunately, while Szent-Györgyi's research was already recognized throughout Europe and his findings on vitamin C were accepted by the League of Nations, he encountered a lack of scientific knowledge and even dismissal of his scientific results in his country by the Hungarian political elite. Even after winning the Nobel Prize, Bálint Hóman, the Minister of Culture, did not recognize its importance. He called Vitamin C a "*big spoof*", which is only good for selling more paprika abroad.

Fortunately, in the inner circles of Szeged Szent-Györgyi was recognized for his work, so he was given university leadership positions thanks to the trust of his colleagues. In the academic year 1934-35, he was elected as dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and after winning the Nobel Prize in 1940-41, he became the first rector of the Horthy Miklós University.

As a dean, Szent-Györgyi's first leadership measures were to strengthen academic discipline and eliminate racial discrimination. While Szent-Györgyi put rigorous procedures in place against sloppy and document forging students, he did his utmost to advance the studies of diligent and inquisitive students. He was always trying to bring his own disciples to the best of opportunities. (Ernö Annau receiving the private teacher qualification, and György Ivanovics receiving the support of the Rockefeller Foundation came to fruition during this period.)

As a leader of the faculty, Szent-Györgyi made sure to shoulder his share of the teaching work to the greatest extent. He taught at two departments at the same time (medical chemistry at the Faculty of Medicine, and pharmaceutical chemistry at the Faculty of Science) and led the departments so that the Ministry, in the absence of a leader, could not liquidate them. To test the effects of vitamin C, he established a national professional partnership with his colleagues. This was dominated by Szent-Györgyi's professional skills, outstanding knowledge and gallant generosity. These have led him, from 1936 onwards, to the recognition of an outstanding number of national Nobel Prize recommendations. Thanks to his extensive

international co-operation, his research has also been recognized in Sweden. In 1937, he was awarded the Nobel Prize, **undivided and unanimously** (with no votes against).

The award of such prestigious recognition made Szent-Györgyi a nationally renowned person. In the self-esteem of a country that has been mutilated after Trianon, an award of such a high degree has provided a huge satisfaction to the nation. Winning the Nobel Prize was also a shining proof of the correctness of the science policies instituted by Klebelsberg. In our work, we analyzed in detail the system of scientific contacts at home and abroad that helped Szent-Györgyi to receive the highest scientific recognition, the Nobel Prize, for a discovery that changed the scientific paradigm (this was the award criterion).

Szent-Györgyi highlighted the international support of American scholarships as a reason for the success to the press, and the very effective international and domestic cooperation, and always emphasized Klebelsberg's assistance in creating these. However, the minister of culture, Bálint Hóman, tried to write the success of Szent-Györgyi in favor of the Hungarian state, claiming (incorrectly) that Szent-Györgyi lived on Hungarian scholarships abroad. Unfortunately, this sharp contrast between the Minister of Culture and the world-famous scholar also overshadowed his activities as a rector. To counteract this, Szent-Györgyi tried to find an ally in Horthy, unfortunately with little success. As a rector, Szent-Györgyi was immediately confronted with the fact that the ministry did not provide enough personal and material resources for the operation of the newly founded Horthy Miklós University. In total 24 officials and 25,000 pengoes per semester were missing from the university's budget, which he had to be repeatedly request from to the Ministry of Culture.

Still, the year of Szent-Györgyi's rectorship (1940/41) is considered to be the brightest period in the history of the University of Szeged before 1945. The student organization, founded by Szent-Györgyi at that time, the SzEI (Szegedi Egyetemi Ifjúság, University Youth of Szeged), which was based on professionalism and did not organize youth on a political or religious basis, was unique in the country. Szent-Györgyi strived to create a liberated, non-discriminatory atmosphere at the university, where he also organized a club room for the students to spend their free time culturally with the cooperation of the city's leadership. The SzEI also functioned as a student interest organization, i.e. it could express opinion on educational issues. Szent-Györgyi considered one of the most important tasks of the university to raise young individuals who are able to think independently and express themselves.

This endeavor failed in an increasingly right-wing shifting country, because under the pressure of the Ministry of Culture, the student body's statutes had to be changed to prevent

the inclusion of Jewish students in the SzEI, and the student body had to give up protecting the interest of its students. In the second semester of the given school year, Hóman even appointed a ministerial commissioner, Tibor Stachó, a private university professor, to oversee student organizations. Hóman, within the framework of the 1940 XXXIX tc. act and the active involvement of the legislature, has even granted himself the right of superintendence over youth associations.

As rector, Szent-Györgyi also supported humanities, set up a Music Lectorate, and supported the introduction of art history education and the establishment of the Department of Comparative Ethnography. In support of the natural sciences, he and his colleagues proposed to the Ministry of Culture the introduction of a doctorate in science and mathematics in Hungary, but to no avail.²⁸

At the same time, as a result of the country's drift into the war, he was also noticed by certain civilian opposition circles. At the initiative of ministry officials Imre Alpáry and Iván Fráter, a political group was formed, which first set out to form a party and, after its failure, became a resistance group following the German occupation. To run the organization, Alpáry et al called on the nationally known and internationally recognized figure, which the scientist undertook, since their goals were the same, such as the fight against fascism and the democratic transformation of the country. The organization also took on the name of Szent-Györgyi (the Albert Szent-Györgyi Resistance Organization, Szent-Györgyi Albert Ellenállási Szervezet - SZESZ) and they considered him their candidate for the Prime Minister position.

He was already the leader of the SZES when he was invited to Istanbul to give a lecture in chemistry. This invitation offered a cover event for contacting the Allies, the idea of which was that of Szent-Györgyi, but preparations were undertaken by the resistance organization. This was the way Szent-Györgyi wanted to speed up the country's exit from the war. He did not do this unprepared. Through his opposition contacts, he was aware of Allied expectations. English politicians, in the so-called "Davidson Letters" *„expected the departure of a prominent pro-government or opposition politician, a formation of an emigrant government or an opposition front and execution of sabotage operations from the Hungarian State”*²⁹ With this in mind, Szent-Györgyi negotiated with all parties (except for the Arrow Cross Party, of course) to appear at the meeting as the opposition's candidate for Prime Minister. Before his trip, he even consulted with Prime Minister Miklós Kállay, who, through

²⁸ Thus, mathematics and science doctorates continued to receive the title of doctor of humanities, which was contrary to the practice abroad.

²⁹ Szelke 2016, 107.

Szent-Györgyi, wanted to contact Steinhardt, an American ambassador in Ankara, to send him a message. Vilmos Nagybaczoni Nagy, the Minister of Defense had two corps ready for the transition.

Szent-Györgyi was able to contact the English, who, according to Szent-Györgyi's memoirs, regarded him as a key person and entrusted him with the operation of a secret radio station through which they could exchange messages. From this point on, our research considers the relationship between the leadership of the SZESZ and the French Aviation Attaché Alfred Krieger, who was the agent of the English secret service in our country, highly probable. Unable to get to Ankara, Kállay sent his oral message to Steinhardt, described in a memorandum. Also in the memorandum, in addition to Kállay's message, he wrote down his own aspirations, preparedness to form a government and take over power at that time. Later, Szent-Györgyi said of his trip that it was a great feeling for him to hold the final outcome of the war in his hands, waiting for the opportunity to move his country to the right side.³⁰

However, his mission came to light, probably because the Germans had somehow become aware of the above memorandum or its contents, and Hitler demanded that Szent-Györgyi be extradited by Horthy (I. Kleissheim meeting, 16-17 April 1943). Although this did not happen, the Minister of the Interior, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, withdrew his passport and threatened Szent-Györgyi with deportation if he did not give up his political activity. After that, Szent-Györgyi strongly restrained from public appearances, and for three months he did not even speak on a scientific topic. During the German occupation of our country, he was again questioned, and the Hungarian authorities ordered his arrest and kept him in house arrest. In August 1944 he successfully escaped from the house arrest and moved to Budapest, by which time the most of the operations of SZESZ took place.

The organization, based on a cellular system, held its leadership meetings, armed and firing trainings in the warehouses and cellars of the Taurus Iron Shop (Nagymező u. 37-39, Budapest). (Hence the name Szent-Györgyi–Taurus resistance organization.) Of the resilient groups, thanks to the professional training officers, training was the most technical here. Its commander, the military leader of the Taurus group, was a captain of the army, Viktor Kruchina, a friend of Szent-Györgyi. The organization was in close contact with the Swedish Embassy, through which it was in constant connection with the Allies through several established radio links. This is how the Allies became aware of German oil deliveries on the Danube from Romania, and more specifically the mooring times of these ships. Thus, these

³⁰ Moss 2003, 152.

ship cargos were destroyed with the help of Allied fighter bombers or the planted underwater mines.

Sabotage operations were also carried out, with the help of lead engineers at the Weiss Manfred Military Munitions Factory triggering successful work stoppages. One of the famous sabotages of the era is the explosion of the Gömbös statue at the Döbrentei Square, which can be linked to Taurus and the SZESZ. On October 6. 1944, the statue was blown up by a communist task force led by Lajos Fehér, the members of the force, according to the sources, acquired the necessary knowledge through training in Taurus cellars. In fact, there is a finding that states that the explosives were provided by Viktor Kruchina, the military commander of the organization.³¹

They were also in contact with Horthy's exit war office through Károly Lázár Lieutenant General. Because the Allies would have liked to have talked with Szent-Györgyi about an exit war strategy,³² Governor Miklós Horthy contacted him. Allegedly, Horthy and Szent-Györgyi had a sitdown three times (the three locations were Lepsény, Kenderes and Székesfehérvár), but Horthy's camp did not dare to position Szent-Györgyi in political negotiations due to the risk of angering the Germans.

At the time of the persecution of the Gestapo, the Embassy of Sweden granted twice shelter to Szent-Györgyi. First, with the help of Viktor Kruchina, he had fled to the Csekonits Castle, the Embassy's evacuation quarters in Enying, and then received Swedish citizenship and a Swedish passport for himself and his wife signed by the King of Sweden, so the Swedish Embassy in Budapest accepted them.

As a result of the Arrow Cross takeover, the SZESZ was unveiled following a denunciation, and after that not only the Gestapo, but also the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party was in pursuit of Szent-Györgyi. His personal safety, if possible, was even more endangered afterwards, and was misused by the Arrow Cross for anti-Soviet propaganda. It was reported that Szent-Györgyi George was captured by the Russians and that he was being tortured. The Arrow Cross also aimed to capture Szent-Györgyi and turn him to their own side. At his last hiding place in the Eszterházy Palace, the Russians found him and placed him and his family in safety, under the highest command. Szent-Györgyi experienced the Russian occupation as an escape. In the village of Heves, at the Soviet headquarters, he was provided with everything, as the nervously exhausted scientist wrote, he was "brought back to life". In 1945,

³¹ Kovács 2015, 200.

³² Milassin István vallomása ÁBTL-3.1.9.-V-118227/58.

like many other democratically-minded compatriots, he was captivated by the opportunities that were open to him, and he began the rebuilding with great enthusiasm. He moved to Budapest, where he finally got a professorship at the Department of Medical Chemistry of the Pázmány Péter University. Szent-Györgyi was outraged by the Soviet army's rape epidemic in Hungary, and has repeatedly complained to Marshal Vorosilov about it. (Once in writing.) He even used his visit to the Soviet Union to intervene personally on this, and on the issue of the release of Hungarian prisoners of war and deportees. However, his visit to Deputy Foreign Minister Dekanozov was unsuccessful.

He also used his trip to the Soviet Union to study the Soviet scientific system. He found the high public funding of science there very attractive, the series of research institutes run and operated by the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the ministerial rank of the academics. Of course, he also noted the mistakes, the bureaucracy that halted actual work and the restrictions on personal freedom. He thought, however, that the model itself could be adopted by our country, thus greatly contributing to the cultural and scientific advancement of the nation. He also found the cultural and scientific convergence between the Soviet Union and his country very important, so he accepted the position of honorary president of the Hungarian-Soviet Cultural Association. Together with his writer friend Lajos Zilahy, they launched a new magazine and he became the editor-in-chief of the *Science* section of *Literature – Science*.

On April 2, 1945, he became one of the eight respected public figures elected to be a member of the Provisional National Assembly, and a member of the honorary society elected by the National Assembly after the 1945 elections. In his speeches, he always sought to use his membership of the National Assembly to urge military disarmament and to increase support for science and culture.

Szent-Györgyi was well aware that the structure of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, abbr. as MTA) was outdated and the member base was ideologically compromised. Therefore, with the help of his physician friend, Zoltán Bay, he began to reform the MTA. At a joint session of the Academy on April 26, 1945, he intervened, which resulted in the exclusion of Archduke József, historian Bálint Hóman, and Ferenc Orsós, a pathologist.

In September 1945 Szent-Györgyi's camp founded a breakaway, independent Academy of Natural Sciences, and after a year of struggle, they succeeded in integrating it into the organization of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with the help of the Ministry of Culture. Through this merger, the aim of an equal representation of the natural sciences and

the social sciences at the class level had been achieved. (Two of the four classes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences represented the humanities and two represented the natural sciences.) It became a principle that classes I. and II. should have the same number of members as classes III. and IV. Zoltán Kodály became the new president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Szent-Györgyi assumed only the vice presidency, as did his uncle back in his time.

Szent-Györgyi also fought hard for state funding for science. The review of the sources shows that in 1945, thanks in large part to the support of the Soviets, they respected his ideas and fulfilled his financial requests. In addition to the small amounts he received to renovate the institute, on September 17, he was voted 20-20 million pengoes a month for a three month period, according to a presented budget plan, for research and meeting the personal needs of researchers. However, the funding of the new MTA fell short, and the institute only applied for and received some support in early 1947. With the help of the Soviets, Szent-Györgyi also came in contact with Rákosi, who promised him support and entrusted scientists and artists with the education of the youth. Szent-Györgyi became president of the National Council of Public Education, where he took Sándor Sík as his vice president, and both of them considered reforming textbooks as a top priority. In his speech in connection with a visit to Szeged in 1945, Rákosi presented Szent-Györgyi as a role model for the young people of Szeged. At Rákosi's request, Szent-Györgyi attended and spoke at the III. congress of the Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt, abbr. as MKP) in September 1946. The title of his speech was „*Scientists are on the side of democracy*”. In his speech, he was delighted to announce the success of his „*Science for Workers, Workers for Science*” initiative. Here, it may have seemed that the aims of the scientist and the communist leadership were the same for the restoration of the Hungarian economy, and for the prosperity of science and culture.

Szent-Györgyi also managed to find a wealthy sponsor in István Ráth to fund his research. In 1945 they have established a joint venture under the name Servita Pharmaceuticals and Chemicals Ltd. This company was the first to introduce penicillin into our country, and their further goals included the domestic production of the antibiotic. It was the connection to István Ráth and the joint venture that helped the communist leadership, which was preparing for a total takeover, to "get a grip" on the Nobel prize-winner scientist, who otherwise had a good relationship with the Soviets.

First, public funding for his research was significantly reduced, then a slanderous article was published in the newspaper of the Communist Party. In an article in the Free

People's 249th issue on the third of November, "*Millions of Forints made from Penicillin by a factory*", Szent-Györgyi's business was accused of profiteering. Despite of the fact that Szent-Györgyi asked for a press correction from the competent ministers and authorities, this did not happen.

It was not only the wealth of István Ráth, but his extensive and far-reaching business and friendly connections that violated the interests of the communists in power. According to some of the interrogation records, he also had friendly relations with Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy.³³ In the spring of 1947, Szent-Györgyi received a benevolent warning that his supporter, István Ráth, would be a targeted victim of the communist destruction machine. Furthermore, he was informed not only that Ráth was in danger, but he himself was in danger in relation to Ráth. So Szent-Györgyi suddenly traveled to Switzerland to "ski", but told his wife to let him know if something happened to Ráth. He soon received the news that his friend had disappeared unexpectedly, and the press reported that he had escaped abroad possible due to embezzlement. First, Szent-Györgyi sent a telegram to Rákosi and then to Prime Minister Lajos Dinnyés asking for Ráth's release. Since no action was taken he decided to telegram Molotov through the Soviet Academy of Sciences. (He was elected to be a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1947.) He promised that if Ráth was not released and was not able to leave the country, he would hold an international press conference to tell what was happening in Hungary. Ráth was released, he received a passport and Szent-Györgyi could successfully leave the country with his wife.

The reason for his emigration was stated as a motivation to leave the country as a consequence of the arrest of his friend. As his autobiographical writings were translated in Hungarian with huge omissions, everyone thought of the arrest of his writer friend, Lajos Zilahy, while actually it was the arrest of his close friend and sponsor, István Ráth. In our earlier works, we have uncovered this philological mistake, which was caused by research due to the omissions. We proved that the real cause of his emigration was much more personal than solidarity with his friend. However, he kept it to himself, and talked about it with a Hungarian journalist just two years before his death: "*It was my understanding that Rákosi was considering putting me behind a barbed wire. So Rákosi was the reason. At first we were in a good relationship, though not in friendship, but Rákosi did everything for me. Later the relationship became very cold and I've received this information.*"

³³ ÁBTL – 3.1.9.- V-2000/34 135.o.

The communist press prepared how to 'serve' Rath's arrest to the public. Ráth was most attacked in the press in the 164th edition of the „*Magyar Szó*”, on a Thursday of the 3rd of July, 1947. According to them, Ráth managed to cross the border with his luxury vehicle and joined Ferenc Gordon, a former Swiss ambassador. With this, serious matters were revealed, that former Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy participated in the black market exchange activities of István Ráth. Ráth had used the drug purchasing routes of his big plant to procure goods for himself and sell them on the black market. Ferenc Gordon assisted him in the acquisition of the goods, and Ferenc Nagy (resigned Prime Minister) protected him from being revealed. Not only did the persons in question commit serious political betrayal, but also stole public property, which is why they disappeared so quickly to escape the popular anger. At this point it took only one further step, through Rath, to involve Szent-Györgyi in this "anti-republic" conspiracy. This story was being prepared by the Free People's issue of November 3. 1946, which had previously accused Ráth and Szent-Györgyi of a profiteering scheme. However, a communist member (perhaps Ernő Gerő), who respected Szent-Györgyi, was able to inform the scientist about the plan in time. Hence, the most famous Hungarian scientist of his era managed to leave his country freely and emigrate to the USA, even though he had a good relationship with the Soviets who educated the communists in Hungary.

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