

BARON UNGERN, TOXIC COSMOPOLITAN

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Executive Summary

The trial of the White commander Baron Roman Fedorovich von Ungern-Sternberg in the Siberian town of Novonikolaevsk on September 15th, 1921, was a showdown of cosmopolitans. The distinguishing characteristic of these and most of the other cosmopolitans of the Russian Revolution is that they were decidedly non-pluralist. They were what the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has called “toxic cosmopolitans” – at once “staunchly supranational” and “staunchly illiberal.” Cosmopolitans on the left saw “empire” as a pejorative and once in power did their best to define their intentions and their state as “anti-imperial.” By contrast, cosmopolitans on the right embraced empire in word and deed and hoped to resurrect both. Yet regardless of their contrasting camps, all the cosmopolitans agreed that the best solutions to the problems of the modern age were to be found in the widest possible combinations, of peoples as well as territories.

This paper addresses the imperial production of toxic cosmopolitanism by examining the case of Baron Ungern. Ungern was not a typical toxic cosmopolitan – the class was too varied to have a typical representative. But he is a useful guide to the empire world that produced the form. While undeniably a loyalist of the tsarist type, Ungern ultimately became something more. He turned to what this paper terms Ungerism – a combination of Asianism, militarism, monarchism, anti-Semitism, mystical Christianity, and imperial ambition that was uniquely his own. The first part of the essay traces Ungern’s life within tsarism. The second treats his journey into Ungerism. The argument of the essay is that neither part existed outside the influences of Russian imperialism.

Introduction

The trial of the White commander Baron Roman Fedorovich von Ungern-Sternberg in the Siberian town of Novonikolaevsk on September 15th, 1921, was a showdown of cosmopolitans. The overseer, Vladimir Lenin, who ordered the proceedings from Moscow, grew up on the Volga, spent years in exile in “Siberian Italy” and the capitals of Europe, had a Franco-Russian mistress, enjoyed Wagner, and read widely in several European languages. The prosecutor, Emelian Iaroslavskii (a.k.a. Minei Gubel’man), a Jew from Eastern Siberia, was just as well-read and well-traveled as his boss, while the defendant was a multicultural military polyglot who faced his accusers dressed in a faded yellow Mongolian cloak (*deel*) outfitted with tsarist-style officer’s epaulettes and the St. George’s Cross.¹ At the trial the multicultural radicals charged the multicultural reactionary with aiming to overthrow Soviet power and restore the Romanov dynasty, while attempting to build (with Japanese help) a Central Eurasian state based in Outer Mongolia and engaging in “bestly killings and tortures on a mass scale.”² The defendant, apparently as frank as he was cosmopolitan, pleaded guilty to all the charges, except the association with Japan. The trial and deliberations lasted a little over five hours. Ungern was shot shortly thereafter.

The distinguishing characteristic of these and most of the other cosmopolitans of the Russian Revolution is that they were decidedly non-pluralist. They were what the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has called “toxic cosmopolitans” – at once “staunchly supranational”

¹ On Lenin and Iaroslavskii, see Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000); V.T. Agalakov, *Emelian Iaroslavskii v Sibiri* (Irkutsk, 1964); and P.S. Fateev, *Emelian Mikhailovich Iaroslavskii* (Moscow, 1980)

² *Sovetskaia Sibir*, 1921, n.197 (557) (14 September), p.1; “Sud nad baronon Ungernom: obvinitel’nyi akt,” *Dal’ne-Vostochnyi telegraf*, 1921, n.41 (20 September), p.1; “Delo Barona Ungerna,” *Pravda*, 1921, n.207 (17 September), p.2. Novonikolaevsk became Novosibirsk in 1926.

and “staunchly illiberal.”³ Unlike flabby and deliberative “political types,” they knew, from either reading Nietzsche, Gorky, or simply from looking around, that one had to “become hard” in order to get things done.⁴ And unlike overly introspective colonial officials and intellectuals, they were quite “at home” with imperial realities.⁵

Cosmopolitans on the left saw “empire” as a pejorative and once in power did their best to define their intentions and their state as “anti-imperial.”⁶ By contrast, cosmopolitans on the right embraced empire in word and deed and hoped to resurrect both. Yet regardless of their contrasting camps, all the cosmopolitans agreed that the best solutions to the problems of the modern age were to be found in the widest possible combinations, of peoples as well as territories. Their empire – that is, the late imperial tsarist empire – where almost every ethnicity had a double life as somebody else’s “other” and “every one except the tsar belonged to a group that was, one way or another, discriminated against,” offered the perfect school for developing such expansive thinking.⁷ Imperial life encouraged cosmopolitanism. Imperial collapse fueled extremism. In the context of revolution and civil war, what resulted was a way of politics that fused both elements, with extremism reinforcing cosmopolitanism and vice versa. Empire, in

³ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ, 2005) p.220.

⁴ This is the invocation of the Nietzschean Zoroaster. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (R.J. Hollingdale, trans.) (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1961) p.231. See also Bernice Glazer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park, Penn., 2002) p.78.

⁵ Ranajit Guha, “Not At Home in Empire,” *Critical Inquiry*, 1997, v.23, n.3, pp.482-493.

⁶ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: 2001) p.19.

⁷ The quoted phrase is from Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, 2004) p.110.

other words, was a central factor shaping the possibilities and outcomes of the Russian Revolution.

But how exactly did this happen? This paper addresses the imperial production of toxic cosmopolitanism by examining the case of Baron Ungern. Ungern was not a typical toxic cosmopolitan – the class was too varied to have a typical representative. But he is a useful guide to the empire world that produced the form.⁸ He lived all across the tsarist state, from the Baltic to Manchuria and Mongolia. He was molded in the empire’s elite military schools and hardened on its frontiers and war fronts. He also had no trouble moving between the empire’s cultures and seems to have instinctively combined them. While undeniably a loyalist of the tsarist type, Ungern ultimately became something more. When the empire cracked apart and it came time to stake claims and step into the future, the baron’s solution was not the call for a straightforward return to tsarism but rather the forward march to Ungernism – a combination of Asianism, militarism, monarchism, anti-Semitism, mystical Christianity, and imperial ambition that was uniquely his own. The first part of the essay traces Ungern’s life within tsarism. The second treats his journey into Ungernism. The argument of the essay is that neither part existed outside the influences of Russian imperialism.

Ungern and the Empire

Ungern’s early life was that of the highly placed and well connected.⁹ He was born on December 29, 1885 in Graz, Austria-Hungary, as the first child of two “vons” – Sophie Charlotte

⁸ On the value of individuals as guides to the environments that shaped them, see Peter Gay, *Schnitzler’s Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914* (New York, 2002), pp.xix-xxv.

von Wimpffen of Hesse and Theodor Leonhard Rudolf von Ungern-Sternberg of Estland. The Ungern-Sternberg clan represented the top tier of the Estland nobility, with roots dating back to the age of the Teutonic knights. Their family crest hung from the wall of the *Domkirche* in Reval (Tallinn), the headquarters of Baltic German Lutheranism. The lords and ladies of their various lineages knew the Romanovs and held prominent posts in the tsar's machinery. And their land holdings dotted the Baltic provinces, including virtually the entire island of Dagö (Hiiumaa) off the Estland coast where Ungern's grandfather owned one of the grandest estate houses of the region (Großenhoff; Hiiu-Surremõisa) and directed a prosperous textile works.¹⁰ Ungern grew up, it seems, on a number of Baltic estates and may have traveled as a young boy to

⁹ The scholarly literature on Ungern is sizeable, though there are no comprehensive biographies and almost no reconstructions of his life prior to the revolution and civil war. The fullest studies are Evgenii Belov, *Baron Ungern fon Shternberg: biografiia, ideologiiia, voennye pokhody 1920-1921* (Moscow, 2003); and two volumes of annotated documents and memoirs edited by S.L. Kuz'min: *Baron Ungern v dokumentakh i memuarakh* (Moscow, 2004) and *Legendarnyi baron: neizvestnye stranitsy grazhdanskoi voiny* (Moscow, 2004). See also Sergei Khatuntsev, "Buddist s mechom: strannaia sud'ba barona Ungerna," *Rodina*, 2004, n.9, pp.51-57; Paul du Quenoy, "Warlordism à la russe: Baron von Ungern-Sternberg's Anti-Bolshevik Crusade, 1917-1921," *Revolutionary Russia*, 2003, v.16, n.2, pp.1-27; Leonid Iuzefovich, *Samoderzhets pustyni: fenomen sud'by barona RF. Ungern-Shternberga* (Moscow, 1993); Jean Mabire, *Ungern, le dieu de la guerre: la chevauchée du général-baron Roman Feodorovitch von Ungern-Sternberg, du Golfe de Finlande au désert de Gobi* (Paris, 1987).

¹⁰ On the grand estate house, see *Eesti mõisad: 250 fotot aastaist 1860-1939/Herrenhäuser in Estland: 250 Ansichten aus den Jahren 1860-1939/Estonian Manor Houses: 250 Photos from 1860-1939* (Tallinn, 2004) p.44. For information on the Ungern-Sternberg family, its most illustrious representatives, and its various genealogical lines, see Rudolf von Ungern-Sternberg, *Nachrichten über das Geschlecht der Ungern-Sternberg aus authentischen Quellen gesammelt* (Breslau, 1875) 2 vols.; O.M. von Stackelberg, *Genealogisches Handbuch der estländischen Ritterschaft* (Görlitz, 1931), pp.439-475; Michael von Taube, "Die soziale und politische Stellung des Geschlechts von Ungern in Altlivland," *Baltische Hefte*, 1959/60, v.3, pp.187-192 and v.4, pp.246-256; Wilhelm Lenz (ed.), *Deutschbaltisches biographisches lexikon 1710-1860* (Cologne and Vienna, 1970) pp.821-829; and Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg, *Neue Nachrichten über das Geschlecht Ungern-Sternberg (1251-2001)* (Basel, 2001). There is also considerable unpublished genealogical material in the Ungern-Sternberg family holding in the *Eesti Ajalooarhiiv* (Estonian Historical Archives), f.1423, nimist [opis']1. See also the full genealogy compiled for the Estland Registry Commission (*Estlandische Matrikelkommission*) in 1926: *Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*, f.1674, n.2, säilik [delo] 207.

the Crimea and the Caucasus as the family followed his father on his tours as a gentleman geologist and intermittent inspector for the Ministry of State Domains.¹¹

In 1891, when Ungern was six years old, his parents divorced.¹² Eventually his father was diagnosed as “mentally unsound” (*umalishennyi*) and interned for a time in a sanatorium in the Estland seaside town of Hapsal (Hapsalu).¹³ In 1894, his mother married a new baron, Oskar von Hoyningen-Huene. Ungern spent the next six years living on his stepfather’s estate of Jerwakant (Järvakandi) in the woodsy countryside sixty eight verstas south of Reval.¹⁴ The neoclassical manor house at Jerwakant was German, from the cellars to the piano room and the staff. German overseers also ran a glass works on the estate. The peasants and workers were Estonian. Relations on the estate were not feudal, but they were close. (Post-feudal may be the best way to describe them.) In the revolution of 1905, local peasants, together (it seems) with outsiders from Reval, burned the Jerwakant manor house.¹⁵ It was never rebuilt.

¹¹ For the father’s activities in these regions, see F.R. Ungern-Sternberg, *O vinodelii na iuzhnom beregu Kryma* (St. Petersburg, 1888); and his *Die Orographie des Kaukasus in Beziehung zur alten Kultur in Vorder-Asien* (St. Petersburg, 1891). See also the father’s doctoral dissertation in geology: *Untersuchungen über den Finnlaendischen Rapawiki-Granit* (Leipzig, 1882). His vita is appended to the back, pp.45-46.

¹² *Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*, f.1187, n.2, s.1801. The dissolution of the marriage appears to have been a mutual decision, though the reasons are unclear. Though far from the norm, divorce was “not rare” among the Lutheran Baltic German nobility in the late 19th century. See Heide W. Whelan, *Adapting to Modernity: Family, Caste, and Capitalism among the Baltic German Nobility* (Cologne, 1999) pp.122-123.

¹³ *Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*, f.860, n.1, s.1672, leht [list], 1.

¹⁴ For a photo of the manor house, see *Eesti mõisad*, p.176. For a description of the locality in 1912, with the count of verstas, see *Spisok naselennykh mest estliandskoi gubernii k 1912-mu godu* (Revel’, 1913) p.14. Prior to the turn in his health, Ungern’s father also remarried. His second wife, Maria Pearce, was a British woman, fifteen years his junior. See Stackelberg, *Genealogisches Handbuch der estländischen Ritterschaft*, p.465.

¹⁵ *Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*, f.3654, n.1, s.54, l.246-252. By 1913, Ungern’s stepfather had sold the estate and was living on the nearby but much humbler property of Wahhakant (Vahakõnnu).

As a boy, Ungern received his education at home in German, which was the norm for Baltic German aristocrats. Then in 1900, at the age of 15, again in keeping with the norm, he left the manor to receive a more worldly education, which in the age of Russification meant entering the Russian system. Ungern's journey towards Russia began at the Nicholas Gymnasium in Reval, the oldest high school in the city and the most likely place for blue-blooded Estlanders to send their sons following the closing of the elite German-language high school (the *Domschule*) roughly a decade earlier. The school was majority Russian with a significant minority of Germans and smaller numbers of Estonians and Jews. Ungern's marks at the gymnasium were terrible, however,¹⁶ and by early 1903, his parents transferred him to a finer address, the Naval School (*Morskoe uchilishche*) in St. Petersburg, which had more barons as well as a few Russian and Caucasian princes. There the teenager's grades improved at first, but in the second year, they declined again, precipitously. In February 1905, Ungern was forced to withdraw "on the advice of the academic council."¹⁷

Finding himself out of school, nineteen years old, and (we can assume) on less than fully happy terms with his parents, he enlisted as a volunteer to fight in the Russo-Japanese War. He arrived in the Far East in early June 1905, some two months before the armistice but in enough time to be deployed to the front and stare at enemy positions. By the fall of 1906, he had returned to St. Petersburg from Manchuria to resume his schooling. After a brief flirtation with the Corps of Engineers, he enrolled in the Paul I Military Academy (*Pavlovskoe voennoe*

¹⁶ For Ungern's personal file and grades for part of the 1901-1902 academic year, see *Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*, f.101, n.1, s.1266.

¹⁷ *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv VoЕННО-Morskogo Flota (RGAVMF)*, f.432, op.1, d.7260, l.13. For Ungern's grade and conduct book, see *RGAVMF*, f.432, op.2, d.2162.

uchilishche), another elite institution. There he settled down enough to graduate in 1908, with average grades and relatively few demerits. He was interested in a career in the cavalry.

Upon graduation, given his middling class rank, Ungern's best cavalry options were in the Cossack regiments. He was offered a posting with the Siberian Cossacks on the Semirech'e line. Instead, perhaps because of his war experience in Manchuria, he chose to join the 1st Argun Regiment of the Trans-Baikal Host, headquartered in the village of Dauriia, on the train line to Harbin.¹⁸ He served with the Arguntsy for two years, until 1910, when he transferred to the 1st Amur Regiment of the Amur Host deployed near Blagoveshchensk, serving with them until late 1912.

Life on the lines consisted of drills, patrols, escort duties (of convicts and settlers), raids (against Chinese bandits), and more drills, punctuated with gambling, drinking, and horse races, in the midst of mostly wilderness and overwhelmingly male company. The officers' libraries had few books. Towns with shops, playhouses, or bordellos could be days away. The Trans-Baikal Cossacks counted a significant minority of Lamaist Buriats on their rolls (12.3 %), plus a handful of Jews and Muslims. The Amur Host, by contrast, had a non-Russian, non-Orthodox population of less than 1 %. The residents of the hosts were poor and isolated, with the two lowest literacy rates of the eleven Cossack hosts in the empire.¹⁹

Ungern did tolerably well in his peacetime service and received the normal promotions, though he was also disciplined for various "incidents." In July 1913, following one of these

¹⁸ *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voенно-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGVIA)*, f.319, op.1, d.630, l.144, 233.

¹⁹ *Otchet glavnogo upravleniia kazach'ikh voisk za 1908 god* (St. Petersburg, 1909) pp.21, 23, 61.

“incidents” (perhaps a duel), he petitioned to resign from active duty.²⁰ Shortly thereafter, for at least a part of 1913, he traveled in the newly declared quasi-independent former Chinese province of Outer Mongolia. Stories later circulated that he had joined the Russian consular guard in the Western Mongolian town of Khovd (Russian: Kobdo) where there were clashes between Mongolian and Qing troops at the time. Baron Wrangel, one of Ungern’s commanders during World War I, without any evidence, wrote that Ungern “commanded the Mongolian cavalry and fought for Mongolian independence.”²¹ It seems more likely that he came to Mongolia “in search of bold accomplishments” (and to see old regiment mates serving with the Russian guard), but then simply returned to Russia, without doing much at all, bold or otherwise.²² At any rate, in the summer of 1914, when “the Great European War” began, he was in Moscow and later Reval.

Ungern was mobilized on July 19th and fought in the war for almost three years, mostly with the 1st Nerchinsk Cossack Regiment of his old Trans-Baikal Host. He served on at least three fronts (Eastern Prussia, the Carpathians/Galicia, and the Caucasus), was wounded at least five times, and received at least five commendations, including the St. George’s Cross he wore at his trial. From the trench-level view provided by his regiment’s “field books” (*polevyie knizhki*), his wartime life consisted of an ebb and flow of shelling, being shelled, raiding, reconnoitering,

²⁰ Kuz’min (ed.) *Baron Ungern v dokumentakh i memuarakh*, p.49.

²¹ P.N. Wrangel’, *Zapiski (noiabr’ 1916 g. – noiabr’ 1920 g.)* (Moscow, 1991) v.1, p.13. The first English translation of Wrangel’s memoirs puts it even more evocatively: “and there he was [Ungern], commander of the whole cavalry force of Mongolia!” *The Memoirs of Count Wrangel: The Last Commander-in-Chief of the Russian National Army* (Sophie Goulston, trans.) (London, 1929) p.7.

²² This is the view suggested by Aleksei Burdukov, a Russian merchant from western Mongolia, who met Ungern in Mongolia at the time. See A.V. Burdukov, *V staroi i novoi Mongolii: vospominaniia, pis'ma* (Moscow, 1969) pp.100-102.

resting, retreating, taking prisoners, moving guns, shooting horses, and running out of supplies, from one village or geometrically defined copse of woods to another.²³

On Ungern's end of "war land," much as in other sectors, merciless slaughter across the front lines was acceptable, while behind the lines equally unsentimental violence, displacement, and deportations – of Jews and others – were commonplace.²⁴ In the swirl of the carnage, officers died in enormous numbers, though Ungern somehow stayed alive, even while charging at the front of assaults or leading reconnaissance sorties behind enemy trenches.²⁵ In recognition of his "selfless bravery," he was promoted to esaul (Cossack captain) in September 1916, though just two months later, in recognition of his "disorderliness," the other side to his bravery, he was sentenced to two months arrest for taking a drunken swipe with his saber at a superior officer.²⁶

The most important development of the war for Ungern, beyond staying alive, was the February Revolution. Order No.1 eroded discipline, which convinced the baron and his fellow Trans-Baikal Cossack half-Buriat comrade, Georgii Semenov, that the only hope for the army lay in organizing units of zealous "native volunteers" to fight alongside the insufficiently dutiful

²³ See, for example, the descriptions in *RGVIA*, f.5281, op.1, d.1, 2, 25, 26, 59.

²⁴ Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, Ind., 1999) pp.16-18, passim; Erich Lohr, "The Russian Army and the Jews: Mass Deportation, Hostages, and Violence during World War I," *Russian Review*, 2001, v.60, n.3, pp.404-419; Alexander V. Prusin, "The Russian Military and the Jews in Galicia, 1914-1915," in Erich Lohr and Marshall Poe (eds.), *The Military and Society in Russia, 1450-1917* (Leiden, 2002) pp.525-544; Joshua A. Sanborn, "Unsettling the Empire: Violent Migrations and Social Disaster in Russia during World War I," *Journal of Modern History*, 2005, v.77, n.2, pp.290-325. The term "war land" is drawn from Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (New York, 2000).

²⁵ By May 1917, the loss rate for officers in Ungern's division (the Ussurii Mounted Division) was approximately 170%. The rate for enlisted men and Cossacks was 200%. See *RGVIA*, f.3532, op.2, d.216, l.360. On Ungern's service in special behind-the-lines detachments, see Ol'ga Khoroshilova, *Voiskovye partizany velikoi voiny* (St. Petersburg, 2002) pp.78, 85, 96, 98-101, 103-104, 132, 198.

²⁶ Kuz'min (ed.) *Baron Ungern v dokumentakh i memuarakh*, pp.55-58.

Slavs.²⁷ Semenov and Ungern began by organizing “native retinues” of this sort in the Caucasus where they were fighting at the time. By summer 1917, in keeping with “the intensification of the ethnic vision” in Petrograd and the *stavka*,²⁸ Semenov was charged by Minister of War Aleksandr Kerenskii to organize a similar initiative among the Buriats. He and Ungern were in Eastern Siberia working on the recruitments when the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd in October and everything changed.

We cannot know who Ungern might have become without the October Revolution, but by the time of the revolution, he was already, by birth and experience, a highly privileged and militarized representative of imperial cosmopolitanism. German by heredity and faith, Russian by sympathies and education, with professional expertise as a frontier warrior, east and west, Ungern was in many camps at once. Yet it is doubtful that the combination of these leanings and specializations caused him much pained introspection. The empire supported a mental “framework” (i.e. “that in virtue of which we make sense of our lives”)²⁹ that largely naturalized balancing acts of this sort, in particular among the right kind of people, and even despite the Russian nationalist lurches of the late tsarist era and the Manichean divides of Russian versus German that defined the war years. By October 1917, Ungern was used to a culture of command, inclined towards military solutions, and had a practical familiarity with geocultural diversity, from the western frontier to the east. His Russo-German-Siberian cosmopolitanism

²⁷ This is Semenov’s account. See his *O sebe: vospominaniia, mysli i vyvody* (Moscow, 1999) pp.64-65.

²⁸ Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, Ill., 2003) p.80.

²⁹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989) p.18.

was a product of the tsarist empire. What came next was the intensification of his cosmopolitanism in Ungernism, which was a function of the empire's collapse.

The Empire and Ungernism

Semenov and Ungern opposed the Bolshevik takeover from the start and took charge of the vacuum of power to gather as many guns and men as they could find in the hills and valleys between Chita and China. Though too late to save the Provisional Government, the Mongol-Buriat regiment was formed in mid-November 1917. By January 1918, the regiment was rolled into the Special Manchurian Brigade (*Osobyi man'chzhurskii otriad*) named after the Manchurian border town of Manchuria (Chinese: Manzhouli).³⁰ Semenov took over nominal command of the brigade, awarded himself the title of ataman, and set up shop in Chita to focus on the higher cause of restoring “order and respect for law” and getting rid of “the destroyers of the fatherland.”³¹

Ungern became the ataman's man in Dauria, his old home, just one railway stop away from Manchuria on the Russian side. He became Major General, then Lieutenant General. And in February 1920, Dauria became the headquarters of his own command, the Asiatic Mounted Division (*Aziatskaia konnaia diviziia*), organized by decree into Tatar, Buriat, and Mongolian regiments though with a majority roster of ethnically Russian Trans-Baikal Cossacks, some of the nominal national groups of the regiments, and a dusting of other nationalities: German and

³⁰ *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv chitinskoi oblasti (GACHO)*, f.329, op.1, d.78. ll.21(b)-24(b).

³¹ See the interview with Semenov in L. Kozheurov, “Zadacha momenta: beseda s Atamanom Semenovym,” *Russkii vostok* (Chita), 1919, 5 February, p.2.

Ottoman P.O.W.'s, Chinese, Ukrainians.³² In the spring of 1920, the Division counted 105 officers, 1233 cavalry, and 365 infantry.³³

Ungern saw his war against the Reds as of a piece with the war against Germany. The same sacrifices were required, the same discipline. "The war now continues," he wrote in 1920 to a civilian official concerned over illegal and abusive labor mobilization "methods" at the Dauria station.³⁴

Yet the war was also different, operationally and ideologically. The enemy was no longer a foreign army and the battles were not fought by roaring out of trenches. The front was everywhere and the foe was an insidious anti-national, anti-God, Jew-ridden conspiracy that needed to be destroyed, not just defeated.³⁵ The Red-White conflict in the hills and steppes of Ungern's corner of the ataman's domain saw more identity checks, detentions, beatings, executions, and requisitions than pitched battles. Spies crossed one way and the other, along with rumors, broadsheets, gun-runners, deserters, and armored trains. There were outbreaks of typhus, surges of refugees, spirals of inflation, and constant concerns with "the popular mood,"

³² For Semenov's order creating the division, see *GACHO*, f.329, op.1, d.13, l.168.

³³ Kuz'min, *Baron Ungern v dokumentakh i memuarakh*, p.14.

³⁴ *GACHO*, f.329, op.1, d.29, l.46 (b).

³⁵ The precise origins of Ungern's anti-Semitism are not clear, but views of Jews as martially unfit, morally corrupt, and disloyal were prevalent in the tsarist officer corps by World War I. See D. Raskin, "Evrei v sostave rossiiskogo ofiterskogo korpusa v xix – nachale xx veka," in D.A. El'iasevich (ed.), *Evrei v Rossii: istoriia i kul'tura; sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (St. Petersburg, 1998) pp.170-174; Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*, p.137 passim; and I. Petrovskii-Shtern, *Evrei v russkoi armii 1827-1914* (Moscow, 2003) pp.353-356. Ataman Semenov, in contrast to Ungern, took a more ambiguous position on the "Jewish question." See L.V. Kuras, "Ataman Semenov i 'evreiskii vopros'," in *Istoriia beloi Sibiri: tezisy vtoroi nauchnoi konferentsii (4-5 fevralia 1997)* (Kemerovo, 1997) pp.46-47; S.P. Zviagin, "Evrei v usloviakh 'Beloi Sibiri' (1918-1920 gg.)," in *Istoriia evreiskikh obshchin Sibiri I Dal'nego Vostoka: materialy pervoi regional'noi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (4-5 noiabria 2000 goda)* (Tomsk, 2000) p.81;

summarized in the weekly district reports (*svodki*) and “information bulletins” submitted to Chita.³⁶

In addition to his duties at Dauriia, Ungern was dispatched at times by Semenov for parleys with contacts in Manchuria. He also was Semenov’s man in charge of the mines at Nerchinsk.³⁷ Ungern ran his war zone with a principled disdain for bureaucratic and civil procedure, which, as he saw it, slowed things down and appeared in any case irrelevant since law had been replaced by war as the basic organizer of identity, purpose, and communal obligations.³⁸

By the summer of 1920, Chita was under pressure from the Red Army and the Semenovites had begun to look for ways out of their predicament. For Ungern, the way out became Outer Mongolia, which by 1919 had been reoccupied by a Chinese republican garrison centered in the head town of Hūree (Urga, later Ulaanbaatar) that had arrested the Mongolian ruler Bogd Khan, considered the Living Buddha and unrivalled symbol of Mongolian independence. Ungern knew from contacts and his own experience that anti-Chinese resentment among the Khalka Mongols was strong. He could thus move to central Mongolia with the support of the Mongolian clans, run out the Chinese, and then use the country as a base for taking the fight back to the Reds.

³⁶ For a small sampling of these materials, see *GACHO*, f.334, op.2, d.138; f.334, op.2, d.154; f.334, op.1, d.65.

³⁷ “Ob”iavlenie shtaba Otdel’noi Vostochno-Sibirskoi Armii,” *Russkii vostok* (Chita), 1919, 9 February, p.1; and “Khronika,” *Russkii vostok* (Chita), 1919, 26 February, p.4.

³⁸ For Ungern’s dismissive view of law (*zakonnost’*) during wartime, see the additional remarks in his letter mentioned above: *GACHO*, f.329, op.1, d.29, l.47.

It is not clear how much more of a plan there was than this in the early fall of 1920. It is also not clear how much Ungern had coordinated the plan with Semenov. But in September 1920, Ungern's Asiatic Division moved into Mongolia. In February 1921, the division, along with various Mongolian allies and fellow travelers, captured Hüreer, chasing out the Chinese. And at this point the relatively simple idea of going to Mongolia to get away from the Reds became something considerably more involved. Once in charge in Mongolia, Ungern implemented Ungernism as an ideology and a way of politics. Ungernism then remained an active cause for the baron until his capture by the Red Army approximately six months later.

The central elements of Ungernism were eliminationist anti-Semitism, monarchism, mystical Christianity, militarism, a variety of tsarist/western Asianism, and an imperialism that drew at once on eastern and western/tsarist traditions. And all of the elements worked together with a predictable logic: Jews were socialists. They had caused the revolution. Therefore they had to be destroyed. Monarchy was the source of all order. It had been undone. Therefore, it had to be restored. The West was corrupted by socialism and Jewry. Therefore, salvation would have to come from the East. War was the best and most obvious means for "cleansing" the land and separating the corrupt from the righteous – that is, distinguishing "the criminals" from those "loyal to the principles of spiritual truth and honesty" (*istina i pravda*). Therefore war had to be embraced.³⁹ Empire – that is, the "combination of the peoples" (except, of course, the Jews) – was a God-given natural form, for Russia as well as for the "yellow races." The scourges of

³⁹ *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (RGVA)*, f.39454, op.1, d.9, l.55 (b).

communism and republicanism had undone the rule of empire. Therefore, empire had to be reconstituted.⁴⁰

Ungern elaborated these positions in his political correspondence and proclamations during the Mongolian campaign, while also pursuing them in practice. There was a pogrom of Russian Jews in Hüree as Ungern's troops captured the town, and killings of Jews and socialists continued in other parts of the country. The Bogd Khan was restored to power as the Mongolian monarch, while former tsarist (neocolonial?) advisors to the Mongolian government were reinstated to help rationalize his domains. Plans for building a Middle Empire (*sredinnoe tsarstvo*) on the basis of the Bogd's state were pursued through negotiations with Kazakh and Mongolian clans, from the eastern Kazah steppe to Barga, while money and guns for the purpose were sought in Russian Manchuria and from disgruntled monarchists in the Chinese republic. And Ungern sent missives to White commanders who had fled the Bolsheviks and were now scattered between Turkestan and the Far East, inviting them to join their forces to his own. The result would be the nucleus of the righteous army that would invade Sovdepia and restore the Romanovs.

The most comprehensive statement of Ungernism was Order No. 15, which Ungern issued in May 1921 to his would-be sympathizers in the anti-Bolshevik coalition as he began to move his division out for the invasion. The order describes a partisan war to be fought on a wide front that would be organized into sectors and run by strict discipline and the control of the railway. Old norms of justice were to be forgotten given the current situation of "complete moral collapse." The only acceptable practice was the destruction of the enemy through "truth

⁴⁰ *RGVA*, f.39454, op.1, d.9, l.53 (b).

and merciless hardness,” whose practical expression was “capital punishment of varying degrees.” Jews and commissars were to be shot “along with their families.” Villages were to be liberated in pursuit of the liberation of larger regions and territories. Former allies and foreign powers were not to be trusted. “The traditions of peoples” were to be restored and “aliens, Poles, and foreigners” and other refugees victimized by the Reds were to be put to service behind the lines. The blazing cause was the defeat of evil:

The evil that has visited the world to destroy the sway of God in the human spirit must be torn out by the roots... The Holy Prophet Daniel foretold of the cruel time when the corrupt and the unclean would be defeated and the days of peace would come: ‘And at that time Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.’⁴¹

In the interrogations that followed his capture, Ungern insisted that the Grand Prince Michael he had in mind was some one more awesome than Mikhail Romanov, the tsar’s brother, though his hope to restore the Grand Prince was otherwise clear.⁴² In any case, the plan did not go far. Ungern’s attempt to invade Red Siberia was undone almost as soon as it began, and the baron was captured near the Russo-Mongolian border in mid-August 1921. He was then tried and shot in Novonikolaevsk a month later.

⁴¹ For the text of “Order No. 15,” see *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiiskoi federatsii* (GARF), f.5431, op.1, d.40, ll.1-3 (b). The order has also been reprinted, most recently in Kuz’min, *Baron Ungern v dokumentakh i memuarakh*, pp.169-173. (The wording of the biblical verse [Daniel, 12:1] that appears here is drawn from the King James version.)

⁴² In 1921 Ungern’s division carried a banner marked on one side with the letter “M” and the Roman numeral “II,” clearly suggesting that the baron’s cause envisioned a future tsar Mikhail II. (The other side of the banner displayed the face of Christ and the inscription “S nami Bog” [God is With Us].) For a photo of the banner, see Kuz’min, *Baron Ungern v dokumentakh i memuarakh*, between pp.256-257. Grand Prince Mikhail had been shot by the Bolsheviks in 1918, though this was not widely known at the time.

Conclusion

The worldview of Order No.15 was the ultimate expression of Ungern's evolution as a toxic cosmopolitan. His cosmopolitanism was created within the Russian empire and then transformed and poisoned by the empire's collapse in a total war that became a total revolution.⁴³ Not all cosmopolitanisms are toxic and not all toxic cosmopolitanisms are the same. But integral to the experience of the toxic cosmopolitans of the Russian Revolution was a familiarity with Russia's multinational and multiconfessional imperial society and a readiness to think of political action and identity in terms of the combination of cultures. The world order of any cosmopolitanism has its limits and complicated hierarchies.

In Ungern's case, Jews could not be members of the ecumene, presumably because they were cosmopolitans of the wrong sort. Socialists could not be members because they were Jews and were in any case abhorrent because of their commitment to "the destruction of morality, order, and God." In the world according to Ungern, the West was dead or dying, corrupted by the twin cancers of revolution and socialism. By contrast, the East was still pure and vigorous and therefore represented the future. In this sense at least, eastern ("yellow-skinned") peoples seemed superior to Western "white-skinned" ones. Yet at the same, the right kind of Western people – that is, people like Ungern – could apparently help to bear the message and lead the fight.

It would be wrong to argue that the late tsarist empire led inexorably to Ungernism. But the empire as particular type of political and social order created the terrain where Ungern could

become a cosmopolitan. In fact, a certain level of cosmopolitanism was expected by the system. The Great War and the revolution that devoured the empire then radicalized this cosmopolitanism and created the opportunities that produced Ungernism. Ungern's life is thus a guide both to what the empire produced and what was produced by its unraveling – a tale of imperial cosmopolitanism, from beginning to end, from better to worse.

⁴³ Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002) and his "Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-1921," *Kritika*, 2003, v.4, n.3, pp.627-652.