



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Hungarians campaign for independence from Austrian Empire, 1859-1867

Time period notes: Although there was resistance to Austrian rule before 1859, including violent resistance in 1848, 1859 here is considered the beginning of the nonviolent campaign for independence because the actions by government constituents at this point launched an 8 year period of sustained civil resistance to Austrian rule.

1859

to: June

1867

Country: Hungary

Goals:

To end the Austrian Empire's rule over Hungary and establish an independent Hungary with a Hungarian Parliament and Constitution.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 145. General administrative noncooperation
- 150. Noncooperation by constituent governmental units

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 076. National consumers' boycott
- 090. Revenue refusal
- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Methods in 4th segment:

- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Methods in 5th segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Methods in 6th segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 037. Singing › The song "Austrian Thieves"
- 179. Alternative social institutions

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- Hungarian Citizens

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Ferencz Deák

Partners:

Not Known

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Members of the Hungarian bureaucracy refused to carry out their jobs in protest of the Austrian rule, assembly members refused to disperse at the orders of the Austrian emperor and were physically detained from the chambers.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Hungarian Nationalists

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Hungarian auctioneers
- Hungarian tax collectors
- Hungarian troops and military
- Members of Hungarian assembly
- Members of Hungarian bureaucracy

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Approximately 1 year 4 months*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Emperor Franz Josef and the Austrian Empire.

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Not Known

Repressive Violence:

Not Known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The campaign succeeded in achieving independence for Hungary. It also achieved rule by a constitutional monarchy under a Hungarian Parliament and Constitution. Every goal of the Hungarian nationalists was met.

Hungarian nationalist groups and government groups, although formally dissolved for short periods, survived through the end of the campaign. The voluntary organizations played a huge part in this structural survival.

The movement started as an 1849 announcement for independence by a group of Hungarian nationalists. This specific time frame began with the refusal of assistance by Hungarian government groups. By the end of the campaign, there was massive participation in noncooperation against the Austrian empire. Soldiers, government officials, tax collectors, and everyday citizens were all part of the campaign for Hungarian independence

In the 1840's there were high tensions between Hungary and the Austrian Empire. Hungary, a part of the larger Austrian Empire, was characterized by nationalistic fervor and that feeling erupted in a violent insurgency in 1848. Franz Josef, the emperor of the Austrian Empire, forcefully put down the rebellion, with assistance from Russian military forces.

After the failed rebellion, the repression from the Austrian Empire only increased. Executions were commonplace and police spies were everywhere. In addition, the constitution was withdrawn and the county assemblies of Hungary were dissolved. Although these are all negative responses resulting from the violent rebellion, Austria's violent repression of the rebellion increased nationalist spirit in Hungary and united the people with independence as a common goal.

Ferencz Deák spent the following years organizing his people through voluntary associations that encouraged nationalism. Throughout Hungary there were groups promoting the Magyar language and music, as well as self-help in business and agriculture.

In 1859, Josef needed the assistance of Hungarians in fighting Napoleon III. When he saw the uncooperative Hungarian people, he learned that the nationalism he had fought to suppress was still flourishing in Hungary. The leadership of the Hungarian military was uncooperative and the troops were unreliable. In order to appease the Hungarian people, Josef restored the county assemblies and made a popular Hungarian general the governor of the country. Josef also set up a federal Parliament in Vienna with representation from all the provincial assemblies, including Hungary. While some Hungarians were satisfied with the restoration of their rights and establishment of the Parliament, most remained determined in their dream of Hungarian independence.

Following the reestablishment of the county assemblies, there were demonstrations against Austrian rule in Hungary. In addition, as a sign of protest, the newly reinstated county assemblies refused to vote for the raising of recruits for the army or the collection of taxes.

In February 1861, Josef attempted to establish a bicameral legislature for the entire Austrian Empire, including Hungary. He wished for the Imperial Parliament of Austria to have more power, but Hungary's own parliament was still given little power. Following this announcement, the Hungarian Parliament met and sent a message to the Emperor stating that Hungary would not recognize the right of the Imperial Parliament to legislate Hungarian affairs. The Hungarian Parliament argued that they would cooperate with Austria only if the Austrian Empire would recognize the ancient Constitution of Hungary, with the emperor becoming a constitutional monarch.

Following this statement by the Hungarian Parliament, Josef responded by dissolving the Hungarian Parliament. When the leading county assembly protested, Josef dissolved that assembly as well. Despite this order by the emperor, the assembly continued to meet until Austrian soldiers entered their meeting chamber and physically carried out the members of the assembly in August of 1861. Following the eviction of the assembly members by the Austrian troops, a supporting crowd of Hungarians gathered outside the chambers. The crowd then held a march through the streets, eventually ending up at the home of the chairman of the council who declared "We have been dispersed by tyrannic force—but force shall never overawe us."

As word of this action spread across Hungary, the notion of Austrian resistance became a nationwide phenomenon. The Hungarians in the bureaucracy refused to transfer their jobs to the Austrians, which left the administration in chaos. Ordinary Hungarians who did not have bureaucracy positions refused to pay taxes to the Austrian Empire and also boycotted Austrian goods. As such actions spread throughout the Hungarian population, Deák emphasized the importance of nonviolence and constitutional legality. For example, when an Austrian tax collector came to collect money, Hungarians told him that he was

acting illegally and continued to refuse to pay. When the police were called to seize the goods of protesting Hungarians, the Hungarian auctioneers refused to auction the goods. Naturally, Austrian auctioneers were brought in, but the Hungarian people refused to bid.

To combat these actions of protest, Josef imposed martial law and began repressive actions against protesters. He declared the boycott of Austrian goods illegal, and soon boycott organizers were overflowing the prisons in Hungary. Josef also began stationing Austrian soldiers in Hungarian households in an attempt to destroy the resistance. Unfortunately for Josef, this lowered soldier morale more than it hurt the movement, and resistance continued. Furthermore, Josef attempted to appease the nationalist movement by granting the boycott organizers in jail amnesty as political prisoners. In response to this, the Hungarians added a new verse criticizing the Austrian Empire to their satirical song, "The Austrian Thieves."

In the years that followed, the resistance continued. New nationalist literature was written, and the voluntary associations became the informal government of Hungary, with Parliament using the groups to spread news and policies throughout the country. This continued even during an economic recession in 1863.

On June 6, 1865, Josef visited Pesth, the capital of Hungary. There were only a few Hungarians who displayed flags of the empire because so many others were part of the nationalist movement that opposed the Austrian Empire. The governor of Pesth was pro-Austrian and thus encouraged the whole city to fly the Austrian flag. Rather than displaying the flag of the empire, however, Hungarians across the city displayed the green, white, and red official flag of independent Hungary.

What greatly helped the Hungarian nationalist movement was the conflict brewing between Austria and Prussia. In an attempt to satisfy Hungary, Josef reestablished the Hungarian Parliament. This was followed with the resumption of the Hungarian Parliament sending demands to Josef for the restoration of the constitution and county assemblies. Josef, pressured by the full-scale war he was waging with Prussia, attempted to gain Hungarian support in the war by promising autonomy. The Hungarians remained opposed to assisting Austria in the war, even after Josef mandated the conscription of Hungarian people for service against the Prussians. He eventually gave up in his efforts to gain support from the Hungarian people.

On June 8, 1867, Franz Josef was named the King of Hungary after he agreed to rule as a constitutional monarch with the restored authority of the Hungarian Parliament over Hungarian affairs. When Ferencz Deák was offered the position of Hungarian Prime Minister, he refused because he wished to continue to serve his country in a quieter lifestyle.

Research Notes

Influences:

none known.

Sources:

Lakey, George. *Strategy for a Living Revolution*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1973.

Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1973.

Additional Notes:

This successful campaign for independence was preceded by the 1848 violent revolt defeated by the Austrian army.

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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